

The prose writings of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor,
1806-1881.

Sheila M. Kidd

Ph.D.

The University of Edinburgh

1998



CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	1
Acronyms	11
Abbreviations	11
Table of Contents	1
Chapter 1 The Rev. Alexander MacGillivray: A Biography	21
Chapter 2 The Rev. Alexander MacGillivray: A Biography	21
Chapter 3 The Rev. Alexander MacGillivray: A Biography	21
Chapter 4 The Rev. Alexander MacGillivray: A Biography	21
Chapter 5 The Rev. Alexander MacGillivray: A Biography	21
Chapter 6 The Rev. Alexander MacGillivray: A Biography	21
Chapter 7 The Rev. Alexander MacGillivray: A Biography	21
Chapter 8 The Rev. Alexander MacGillivray: A Biography	21
Chapter 9 The Rev. Alexander MacGillivray: A Biography	21
Chapter 10 The Rev. Alexander MacGillivray: A Biography	21
Conclusion	188
Appendix 1 Catalogue of the Papers, Writings of the Rev. Alexander MacGillivray	193
Appendix 2 Selected Writings	215
Appendix 3 Selected Letters	247
Appendix 4 Proverbs and Sayings	251
Appendix 5 Elegy for the Rev. Alexander MacGillivray	267
Bibliography	269

This thesis has been composed by me and all the work contained herein is my own

Signed:

CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Abbreviations	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 The Rev. Alexander MacGregor: A Biography	7
Chapter 2 Contemporary Background	27
Chapter 3 The Nineteenth Century Gaelic Periodical Press	35
Chapter 4 Form and Style in MacGregor's Writing	46
Chapter 5 Famine and Emigration	69
Chapter 6 Slavery	99
Chapter 7 The Natural World	114
Chapter 8 Highland Folklore	134
Chapter 9 Proverbs and Moral Tales	154
Chapter 10 The Writer's Attitude to Gaelic	172
Conclusion	188
Appendix 1 Catalogue of the Prose Writings of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor	193
Appendix 2 Selected Writings	215
Appendix 3 Selected Letters	247
Appendix 4 Proverbs and Sayings	251
Appendix 5 Elegy for the Rev. Alexander MacGregor	267
Bibliography	269

The prose writings of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor, 1806-1881.

ABSTRACT

This thesis considers the Gaelic and English prose writings of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor (1806-1881), who was a minister of the Established Church in Kilmuir, Skye, in Edinburgh, and latterly in Inverness. Along with the Rev. Dr. Norman MacLeod (Caraid nan Gaidheal), he was one of the most prolific writers of Gaelic prose in the nineteenth century. The thesis includes a catalogue of all his known writings, published and unpublished, numbering 278 separate entries. Although use is made of his writings in English there is a particular emphasis on those written in Gaelic. His writings span the period 1838-1881. The thesis considers the subjects which he chose to write about, the style in which he wrote, and the purpose to which he put his writing. It begins by providing background to the period, biographical information about the writer and discussion of the forms and styles which he used in his writing. A thematic approach is then adopted, considering by chapter, his writings on famine and emigration, slavery, the natural world, Highland folklore, proverbs and moral tales and finally his attitude to the Gaelic language. Account is taken of those influences both from within and outwith the Highlands which moulded his writing, influences such as English language journals, the Victorian ethos of improvement and self-help, the romanticisation of the Highlands, and the impulse to preserve the past. These chapters offer insights into the activities and interests of the Moderate Gaelic-speaking clergyman of the nineteenth century, of whom there were a significant number involved in activities similar to MacGregor's, whether as writers of Gaelic prose, collectors of proverbs, or those with an active interest in Highland folklore. His writings shed light on social change in the Highlands in the nineteenth century, from the perspective of a minister whose parishioners experienced famine and emigration in the 1840s. Equally revealing is his perspective on the issues of land rights in the period immediately prior to the Land Agitation period of the 1880s. MacGregor's writing also furnishes information about the emerging Gaelic periodical press in the nineteenth century, demonstrating the way in which it provided the clergy with a wider audience than was previously available to them, to whom they could preach and teach through the printed word. The thesis concludes that MacGregor's writings show how a new role had emerged for ministers both in interpreting the outside world for the Gaels in their native language, and in interpreting the Highlands for the outside world, as demonstrated by MacGregor's writings in both Gaelic and English.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Mr Ronald Black and Professor William Gillies, for their guidance and support during my work on this thesis. Their thoughts and comments in the course of my research have been consistently helpful and illuminating. Thanks are also due to Professor Donald Meek for encouraging me to undertake a Ph.D. in the first place and for acting as supervisor in the first year of my research.

I am grateful to the staff of the following libraries and archives who were unfailingly knowledgeable, patient and friendly in helping me with my enquiries: Special Collections, Edinburgh University Library; National Library of Scotland; School of Scottish Studies Library, University of Edinburgh; Central Library, Edinburgh; Public Library, Inverness; Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh; Central Region Archive, Stirling; Clan Donald Trust, Skye.

Among the individuals whom I must thank for their advice and support while I researched this thesis are: Máire Black; Joan Macdonald; Thomas Owen Clancy; Cathair Ó Dochartaigh; Rob Ó Maolalaigh; Julianna Grigg; Jimmy Black; Rosemary Gibson; Mike Kennedy; Anja Gunderloch; Frank and Jean McGhee, my parents in-law.

My greatest debt is to my parents and my husband, Alastair, without whose constant encouragement and support this thesis would not have been completed.

ABBREVIATIONS

CM	<i>Celtic Magazine</i>
CEJ	<i>Chambers' Edinburgh Journal</i>
CG	<i>Cuairtear nan Gleann</i>
Clàr	Catalogue of Alexander MacGregor's writing in Appendix 1.
DSCHT	<i>Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology</i>
An G.	<i>An Gaidheal</i>
FT	<i>Fear-Tathaich nam Beann</i>
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NSA	<i>New Statistical Account of Scotland</i>
OPR	<i>Old Parish Records</i>
OSA	<i>Old Statistical Account of Scotland</i>
PP	<i>Parliamentary Papers</i>
RSCHS	<i>Records of the Scottish Church History Society</i>
SGS	<i>Scottish Gaelic Studies</i>
SRO	Scottish Record Office
SS	<i>Scottish Studies</i>
TG	<i>An Teachdaire Gaelach</i>
TGSI	<i>Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness</i>
TH	<i>Highlander</i>

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this thesis is the substantial body of prose writing in Gaelic and English by the Rev. Alexander MacGregor which appeared in print between 1838 and 1881. With the possible exception of the Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod, MacGregor was the most prolific Gaelic writer of this period, as is demonstrated by the catalogue of his work in Appendix 1, which numbers 278 separate items. MacGregor wrote under three pen-names, 'Sgiathanach', 'S.' and 'Alasdair Ruadh' as well as under his own name. As evidence that these three pen-names were in fact those used by him, I cite a short piece from the obituary for him which appeared in the *Celtic Magazine* of December 1881:

He contributed largely to 'Cuairtear nan Gleann', edited by Old Norman MacLeod. Most of his contributions are signed 'Sgiathanach', or 'Alasdair Ruadh', but many are only signed 'S.', and in several cases, not at all.¹

This use of pen-names may have contributed to his relative anonymity today. Despite the paucity of twentieth century comments, MacGregor was clearly highly regarded as a writer by his contemporaries, as evidenced by Alexander Carmichael's comment that 'his English papers and lectures are of a high order, while his numerous Gaelic writings are scarcely, if at all, inferior to the celebrated Gaelic writings of the elder Dr Norman MacLeod'.² The scope of this study, however, is wider than his writings, involving a consideration of those factors which informed and influenced his work, and in turn of what his writing conveys about both the period in which he was writing and his own response to it.

First, however, it is important to acknowledge the extent to which Gaelic prose writing, and that of the nineteenth century in particular, has been neglected within the sphere of Gaelic studies. Donald John MacLeod, who has published more than any other single writer on Gaelic prose, comments with reference to the early and late nineteenth century that

With a few notable exceptions, the most that can be said of the Gaelic prose produced in both these periods is that it is of historical significance, establishing prose-writing as a new genre in Gaelic and evolving a standardised Gaelic prose style, after a period of varied experimentation.³

¹ Obituary, *CM*, 74 (1881), 92-99 (p. 96).

² Alexander Carmichael, Letter, *TH*, 27 October 1877, p. 6.

³ Donald John MacLeod, 'Gaelic Prose' in *The History of Scottish Literature* Vol. 4, ed. by Cairns Craig (Aberdeen, 1987), pp. 331-35 (331).

At the very least, this underestimates the importance of the emergence of a new tradition of Gaelic prose writing in the course of the nineteenth century. One of the 'notable exceptions' referred to is the Rev. Dr. Norman MacLeod (Caraid nan Gaidheal) who has been credited by D. J. MacLeod with being the 'father of Gaelic prose'. Given this exalted position accorded him, it is indicative of the neglect of Gaelic prose writing that the only published twentieth century study of his work is a paper delivered to the Gaelic Society of Inverness by Edward MacCurdy.⁴ The first collected edition of MacLeod's writings appeared in print in 1867 (reprinted in 1899), and was described in 1904 as 'the greatest monument of Highland Gaelic original prose'.⁵ There has been no revised edition. The neglect of MacLeod and other contemporary writers is all the more marked given that twentieth century scholarly editions exist of the prose writings of Donald MacKinnon, the Rev. Donald Lamont and the Rev. Kenneth MacLeod, whose contributions to Gaelic prose, although significant and worthy of study, are not credited with the same landmark status as their predecessor. This may be due in part to the fact that the Biblically influenced style of MacLeod and his contemporaries tends to be viewed as 'highly rhetorical' and too unwieldy for twentieth century tastes compared with those whose writing they helped shape. Donald John MacLeod has gone as far as to suggest that Norman MacLeod's stylistic influence is 'regrettable'.⁶

Since this treatment of the 'father of Gaelic prose' may well represent a consensus in twentieth century Gaelic scholarship it is hardly surprising Alexander MacGregor has suffered even greater neglect, in spite of how prolific he was as a writer. In 1892, eleven years after his death, he was described as being 'among the best story-tellers of his age, ranking probably, as far as that gift is concerned, next to Norman MacLeod'.⁷ One of the rare twentieth century comments on MacGregor's writing is to the effect that he was probably one of the most successful writers of the nineteenth century in establishing an all-purpose formal register for Gaelic prose.⁸

⁴ Edward MacCurdy, "'Caraid nan Gaidheal'", *TGSI*, 39/40 (1942-50), 229-42. Another article about him, which focuses not on his writing but on his involvement in encouraging the Irish clergy to use Irish, is Colm Ó Baoill, 'Norman MacLeod, *Cara na nGael*', *SGS*, 12 Pt 2 (1981), 159-68.

⁵ Magnus MacLean, *The Literature of the Highlands* (Glasgow, 1904), p.15.

⁶ Donald John MacLeod, 'Gaelic Prose' *TGSI*, 49 (1974-76), 198-230 (p. 208).

⁷ Nigel MacNeill, *The Literature of the Highlanders* (Stirling, 1892), p. 508.

⁸ MacLeod, *TGSI*, 49, p. 207.

It is no coincidence that the clergy were so prominent amongst the writers of Gaelic prose in the nineteenth century. The history of printed Gaelic prose is inextricably linked to religion. The first printed book to appear in Scottish Gaelic was *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh* in 1567, John Carswell's adaptation of a text central to the reformed religion, the *Book of Common Order*. Fundamental to the reformed Protestant religion was the belief that each person should be able to read and understand the Scriptures for himself. Carswell's work marks the beginning of a programme of Gaelic religious translation, initiated by the Synod of Argyll, which was to occupy many clerical translators from the mid seventeenth to mid nineteenth centuries. Translation of the New Testament of 1767, for example, absorbed the energies of the Rev. James Stuart, Killin, with the Rev. James Fraser, Alness revising his manuscript. The Gaelic Old Testament, first published in 1801 was translated by Stuart's son, the Rev. John Stuart, Luss, and the Rev. John Smith, Campbeltown.⁹ Other ministers were involved in the translation of religious texts by writers such as John Bunyan, Richard Baxter and Thomas Boston. Alongside those ministers who were translators were those engaged in other literary activities. In the eighteenth century for example, the Rev. Alexander Pope of Reay and the Rev. James MacLagan, Blair Atholl, were collecting Gaelic ballads and the Rev. Ewen MacDiarmid, of the Gaelic Chapel of Ease, Glasgow, and latterly of Comrie, Strathearn, was collecting Gaelic poems and proverbs.¹⁰ Thus it is possible to see Alexander MacGregor as drawing from both the religious and secular streams of clerical activity which preceded him, as exemplified by his translation of the *Apocrypha* into Gaelic and his writings on Highland folklore. It is not, however, within the remit of this thesis to discuss his translations, other than in the passing.

If Gaelic prose in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was typified by religious translation, nineteenth century Gaelic prose, as with prose in Britain as a whole, is best represented by the periodical. At a time when the great landmark religious translations had been completed, this offered a new outlet for the literary and scholarly skills of clergymen (and others), in both religious and secular prose writings,

⁹ See Donald Meek, 'The Gaelic Bible' in *The Bible in Scottish Life and Literature*, ed. by David F. Wright (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 9-23; Donald W. MacKenzie, 'The Worthy Translator - How the Scottish Gaels Got the Scriptures in Their Own Language', *TGSI*, 57 (1990-92), 168-202.

¹⁰ See Derick S. Thomson ed., *The MacDiarmid MS Anthology: Poems and Songs Mainly Anonymous from the Collection Dated 1770* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 3 and 22.

and opened up to them and their readers a new range of potential subjects and styles, which has yet to be fully researched. Many ministers contributed to these journals, among them the Rev. Dr Archibald Clerk, the Rev. Dr Alexander Cameron, the Rev. Dr Thomas MacLauchlan, the Rev. Duncan Blair and the Rev. Dr Alexander Stewart. The journals presented the clergy with a new challenge. Having made the Scriptures available to the Gaels in their native language, the next step was to provide them with additional reading material of a suitable nature. A general overview of these periodicals, their content and their contributors is contained in Chapter 3: The Nineteenth Century Gaelic Periodical Press. In studying Alexander MacGregor, this thesis presents a case study of one minister with the purpose of furthering our understanding in three specific areas: (1) the contribution made by ministers, particularly moderate ministers such as him, to prose literature, and indeed to Gaelic scholarship, in the course of the nineteenth century; (2) the emerging Gaelic periodical press and the development of Gaelic prose writing; (3) perceptions of, and responses to, social change in the nineteenth century Highlands.

In studying MacGregor's writings, the questions which give shape to each chapter focus primarily on what he chose to write about, the way in which he wrote about it and the purpose which he perceived his writing as having. Secondly, consideration is given to those influences, both internal and external to the Highlands, which affected his work. Amongst the internal factors which will be discussed are the social upheavals of clearance and emigration in the first half of the century, and linguistic and cultural revival in the second half. This thesis also discusses the extent to which MacGregor's position as a member of the clergy constrained him and influenced his views. In terms of external factors, attention will be given to the significance of English language journals, the Victorian ethos of improvement and self-help and the emergence of romantic and antiquarian interest in the Highlands.

Central to the thesis is the catalogue of MacGregor's known writings which is contained in Appendix 1. This catalogue, as already stated, runs to 278 separate entries, ranging from books, essays and dialogues to lectures and letters, both published and unpublished. Appendix 2 consists of a selection of texts demonstrating the range of themes and styles within this corpus of writing. Selection was carried out on the basis of providing a sample of MacGregor's range of styles and subjects. Thus

there are essays, dialogues and tales in the form of Biblical style verses; there are writings on emigration, land rights for crofters, nature, folklore, Gaelic education, proverbs and a moral tale. The original spelling has been retained throughout, which accounts for orthographic inconsistencies.

The thesis begins by studying the writer's life in Aberdeenshire, Skye, Edinburgh and latterly Inverness and then introduces the period in which Alexander MacGregor was active as a writer, highlighting those events and issues of particular relevance to him and his writing. The following chapter presents an overview of nineteenth century Gaelic periodicals, with particular emphasis on those to which MacGregor himself contributed. Chapter 4 discusses the various forms and styles which he drew upon in his writing, and consideration is given to the way in which he and his contemporaries adopted styles which might facilitate the acceptance of the printed word in what was still a predominantly oral environment; there is a particular focus on his use of the written dialogue, after the style of Norman MacLeod. Having established the stylistic parameters of MacGregor's writing, the remaining chapters adopt a thematic approach to his published work. The first of these considers his response to the social crises of famines, clearance and emigration in the first half of the century and offers for comparison his writings on the need for land reform in the 1870s. The chapter questions the extent to which he conforms to stereotypical images of the moderate clergyman supporting landlord policy. The thesis then moves to considering MacGregor's writings on social issues of a more international nature, namely slavery. The question is raised as to why MacGregor chose, in the middle of the nineteenth century, to write in Gaelic about the suffering of slaves when thousands of Gaels were suffering the effects of famine and clearance, and whether MacGregor saw the issue of slavery as a means of distracting attention from social oppression in the Highlands or as a means of placing the oppression of the Gaels in an international context.

Chapter 7 surveys his writings on the natural world. These consist of essays on a range of topics from astronomy to coral which are discussed in the context of contemporary scientific advances. Particular attention is devoted to the ways in which he deployed these subjects, partly as a means of dispelling Gaels' 'ignorance' about the workings of their natural environment, and partly as a means of promoting a religious

message. Chapter 8 follows on from the theme of progress in Chapter 7, by studying his presentation of folklore material as a manifestation of both the nostalgic impulse and the sense of progress from the days of 'superstition'. *Highland Superstitions* is probably the best known of all his works, and it is on this that the first section of the chapter focuses. Subsequently, the allegation made in one study that MacGregor was antipathetic to folklore is refuted by taking into account his writings in Gaelic as well as those in English; there is also discussion of the extent to which his choice of language dictated the attitudes which he expressed. Chapter 9 is concerned with MacGregor's provision of morally uplifting reading material which ranges from the traditional to the modern, the former consisting of Gaelic proverbs and the latter his own moral tales, which teach by example. As MacGregor was himself a collector of proverbs, although his collection was lost, this thesis provides in Appendix 4 a listing of all those proverbs which he used in his writing, totalling 134. Concluding the thematic survey, Chapter 10 explores the writer's attitude to the Gaelic language, with a particular emphasis on the 1870s when the issue of language became part of the Gaels' struggle for legislative justice. It will examine how his views manifested themselves and how typical they were for the period. The thesis will conclude by drawing together these various aspects of MacGregor's work in order to characterise the writer and the significance of his writing.

CHAPTER 1

THE REV. ALEXANDER MACGREGOR: A BIOGRAPHY

The Rev. Alexander MacGregor was one of the most prolific Gaelic writers of the nineteenth century, contributing to most contemporary periodicals which published Gaelic. He also wrote a significant amount of prose in English relating to Highland issues, and carried out translations from English to Gaelic.¹ No comprehensive study of his life exists, and in consequence this must be pieced together from a range of sources. The two main published sources of information about his life are *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* and a chapter in *Biographies of Highland Clergymen*.² The latter is based on one of the obituaries written on MacGregor and contains a number of errors, most notably concerning his date of birth.

Any biographical description of the life of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor must take account of those places and events which shaped him and which influenced his thoughts and writings. It is with this in mind that this brief biography of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor will begin by tracing a geographical route from the place of his father's birth in Perthshire via the place of his own birth in Aberdeenshire, to Skye where both he and his father were ministers, to a relatively brief sojourn in Edinburgh and finally to Inverness, where he would spend the last twenty-eight years of his life. This will provide a framework within which to detail aspects of his life and work.

MacGregor's father, the Rev. Robert MacGregor, was born in the parish of Fortingall, Perthshire, in 1767. He was the second son of Margaret Menzies and her husband, Alexander MacGregor, a tailor and crofter, who lived at Ardtrasgairt at the foot of Glenlyon, no more than a few hundred yards from the dwelling-place of one

¹ The obituary for Alexander MacGregor in the *Northern Chronicle* states that 'his published works would fill many volumes' (26 October, 1881). Appendix 1 consists of a catalogue of all MacGregor's known writings: his prose in Gaelic and English, his translations and his letters.

² Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, vol. 8 (Edinburgh, 1950), p. 684; *Biographies of Highland Clergymen* (Inverness, 1889), pp. 70-81. This is a collection of obituaries from the *Inverness Courier* and contains a portrait of MacGregor.

of Perthshire's most illustrious Gaels, James MacGregor, Dean of Lismore.³ Duncan Campbell, author of *Reminiscences and Reflections of an Octogenarian Highlander*, himself a native of Glenlyon, tells of Robert's older brother, Duncan, otherwise known as Donnchadh Mòr na Pioba, or 'Garth's fool' and of his twin sister, Margaret, both of whom were born 'naturals'.⁴ Duncan fancied himself as a piper and travelled the surrounding area seeking payment for what Campbell suggests was a less than accomplished performance. His description of Robert's older brother gives some hint of the colourful character he must have been:

He always wore on his head no Highland bonnet but an old chimney-pot hat. He got their discarded ones from gentlemen and ministers. His jackets were well bedizzened with buttons. He wore a girdle and shabby sporran. His kilt was less like a kilt than a woman's short petticoat. Brogues and either hose or stockings, as necessity decreed, completed his attire.⁵

Robert's younger brother, Alexander, was born two years after him in 1769. While Alexander was still a baby, Campbell tells that their father died, leaving his widow to raise four children.⁶

This part of Perthshire had long been associated with the Clan Gregor, through the MacGregors of Roro in Glenlyon, and the clan's past is commemorated in poems such as *Mac Griogair a Ruadhshruth* and *Cumha Ghriogair Mhic Ghriogair Ghlinn Sréith (Griogal Cridhe)*. Alexander MacGregor's interest in his Perthshire ancestry is reflected in one of his prose dialogues, published in 1877, in which one of the characters, Murachadh, relates some of the history of the MacGregors, detailing their oppression and outlawing.⁷ Another feature of Fortingall's history which Alexander MacGregor drew upon in his writing was Clann an Sgeulaiche, the renowned MacGregor family who had a school of piping in Fortingall and who he said were 'ceart co iomraiteach 's na linn-tìbh a dh'fhalbh ri

³ *Fasti*, vol. 8, p. 684; 'Death and Funeral of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor', *Northern Chronicle*, 26 October 1881.

⁴ Duncan Campbell, *Reminiscences and Reflections of an Octogenarian Highlander* (Inverness, 1910), pp. 34-45. Campbell was the first editor of the *Northern Chronicle*, which began publication in Inverness in 1881.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43. Campbell, writing in the *Northern Chronicle*, 4 August 1884, explains that he had known Duncan MacGregor: 'Bu mhath a b'aithne dhomh e dar bha esan sean agus mise am ghiullan.'

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁷ Clàr 126.

cloinn Mhic Criomain Dhùnbheagain, no ri cloinn Mhic Artair, piobairean Mhic Dhomhnuill nan eilean'.⁸ In an article entitled 'Am piobair aosda agus a phiob', published in 1876, it becomes clear that MacGregor must have retained some contact with Perthshire. He explains that he had received a letter from one of the last remaining members of this piping family, John MacGregor, of Fortingall, a few years earlier requesting his help, 'air dha a bhi 'na fhear-cinnidh dha'.⁹ The grandfather of this man, also John MacGregor, had played the pipes at all the major battles of the '45, and his grandson wanted the bagpipes he had played during the campaign to be passed on to someone who would appreciate them. Alexander MacGregor publicised this request and the pipes finally found a home at Blair Castle, seat of the Duke of Atholl. Alexander MacGregor also demonstrated an interest in the historical tales of Glenlyon, contributing articles such as 'Amanna Fuilteach ann an Gaidhealtachd na h-Alba' to *Fear-Tathaich nam Beann*, in which he relates the events surrounding a fifteenth century inter-clan dispute between the Laird of Garth and the MacIvers of Glenlyon.¹⁰

Although Perthshire is no longer a Gaelic-speaking area, the entry for the parish of Fortingall in the *Statistical Account of Scotland* points out that at the end of the eighteenth century, 'the Gaelic is the language that is commonly spoken'.¹¹ Indeed this part of the Highlands produced many Gaels who were active in literary or scholarly activities, particularly in the later eighteenth century, such as (to name but a few) the Rev. James MacLagan, translator of part of the scriptures into Gaelic and collector of Gaelic songs and ballads; the Rev. Ewen MacDiarmid who collected Gaelic verse; father and son, the Revs James Stewart and John Stuart, ministers of Killin and Luss, Loch Lomond, who translated respectively the New Testament and part of the Old Testament into Gaelic; the poet Dugald Buchanan, born in Strathyre, and catechist in Rannoch who supervised the printing of Stewart's New Testament;

⁸ Clàr 105, p. 20.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Clàr 34. This same tale is given in Major-General David Stewart's *Sketches of the Character, Institutions and Customs of the Highlanders of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1822, 2 vols; 2nd ed. (in one vol.), Inverness, 1885), p. 310.

¹¹ OSA, vol. 12 p. 430.

and the Rev. Alexander Irvine, a native of Fortingall, who was active in the translation of the Scriptures into Gaelic.

It is in this context of ministers involved in religious translation and scholarly activities that Robert MacGregor should be seen. Robert was employed as schoolmaster at Dull while studying at Edinburgh University, and he completed his studies there in 1796. It was not unusual for those attending divinity courses to attend university somewhat irregularly whilst holding down a position as schoolmaster or tutor.¹² When Robert was licensed as a preacher by the Presbytery of Dunkeld in 1798, his brother succeeded him as schoolmaster in Dull.¹³ According to Duncan Campbell, both brothers intended to pursue careers within the Church and so were appointed as 'colleague schoolmasters' so that they could attend divinity classes in alternative sessions. Alexander, however, only completed two sessions before marrying and settling down as the permanent schoolmaster.¹⁴ In 1799 Robert was ordained as a missionary at Tulloch, Glenmuick and Glengairn, near Ballater, on the Royal Bounty.¹⁵ Five years later, on 2 February 1804, he married Janet Menzies from Dull.¹⁶

The Rev. Robert MacGregor, in common with many of his contemporaries in the clergy, did not confine his activities to religion. In 1801 he prepared an edition of the poems of the Glenlyon poet, John MacGregor, am Bàrd Smeatach.¹⁷ In this publication, *Orain Ghaelach*, which contains over fifty songs, the poet explains in the preface that 'he laboured under the peculiar disadvantage of being unable to write his vernacular language', and reveals that the collection came to appear in print when

¹² The Rev. Stewart Mechie, 'Education for the ministry in Scotland since the Reformation II', *RSCHS*, 14 (1960-63), 161-78, (p. 163).

¹³ *Fasti*, vol. 7 (Edinburgh, 1928), p. 172; 'Death and Funeral of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor'.

¹⁴ Duncan Campbell, p. 35. Campbell states that the brothers attended St. Andrews University; however, it is known that Robert MacGregor attended Edinburgh University as his poem *An Coir Chomuinn: No moladh do 'n Chomunn Ghaidhealach ann an Dun-Eideann* indicates, see fn. 22.

¹⁵ The Royal Bounty originated in an annual provision of £1000 by the king dating back to 1725, and was used to employ catechists and missionary ministers in the remoter parts of large Highland parishes. See *DSCHT*, p. 733.

¹⁶ *OPR*. 201/1-2, Register of Marriages for Glenmuick, 1804, p. 94.

¹⁷ Alexander Stewart in *History of a Highland Parish* (Glasgow, 1928), p. 277, explains that the term 'smeatach' refers to a disfigurement of the nose which the poet suffered as a result of smallpox.

'at the request of Sir John Macgregor Murray, the Reverend Mr Robert Macgregor kindly undertook to transcribe and prepare it for the press'.¹⁸

Robert MacGregor was himself a poet, and also a collector of Gaelic poetry. Poems collected by MacGregor during his time in Glengairn survive amongst the Invercauld papers at Invercauld House near Braemar. These manuscripts contain ten poems collected by MacGregor during his period in Glengairn.¹⁹ This corpus of texts, in addition to elegies and eulogies for people of the area, includes two examples of Jacobite verse from the district, *Francis Mac Fhionnlaidh Mhic Fhearchair* and *Oran a rinn fear d'a nighinn fèin nach robh leth-bhliadhn' a dh'aois, agus anns a' bheil iad a' freagradh a chèile*.²⁰ As regards his own compositions, we know of four poems which he himself wrote, and of another which he is likely to have composed. Two of his poems first appeared in print, thirty years after his death, within his son's prose dialogues. In each case one of the characters recites the poem and indicates that the Rev. Robert MacGregor was its author. *Moladh do Eobhan MacGriogair, Ridir Lanric, air son a ghaistige ann an Dun-Talneir ann an Innsibh na h-Aird-an-ear* appeared in *An Gaidheal* in 1877 and *Co-labhairt eadar dilleachdan gu'n mhaoin agus an uaigh* appeared three issues later in the same journal.²¹ Excerpts from another of MacGregor's poems, *An Coir Chomuinn: No moladh do 'n Chomunn Ghaidhealach ann an Dun-Eideann*, appeared in the printed form of a speech given by Alexander to the Gaelic Society of Inverness in 1872, with 'Rev. Robert MacGregor, Skye' appended to each quotation.²² The entire poem first appeared in print in the *Northern Chronicle* in two parts in 1883.²³ Also by Robert MacGregor is a poem included in John MacGregor's *Orain Ghaelach*, entitled *Moladh a' Bhaird, le fear-cinnidh dha*. In the book's introduction the poet states that the editor furnished

¹⁸ Iain MacGhriogair, *Orain Ghaelach* (Edinburgh, 1801), p. vii.

¹⁹ These manuscripts are discussed and the poems published in Adam Watson, 'Old Gaelic poems from Aberdeenshire', *SGS*, 14 Pt 1 (1983), 25-58. See also the Rev. Charles M. Robertson, 'Gaelic Poems collected in Braemar by the Rev. Robert MacGregor, minister of Kilmuir, Skye, and others composed by himself and Mr. Alex. MacGregor, schoolmaster, Dull', *TGSI*, 33 (1925-27), 2-43; Alison Diack, 'Gaelic vernacular verse from the parish of Glenmuick, Tulloch and Glengairn', *Scottish Language*, 14/15 (1995-96), 234-50.

²⁰ Watson, pp. 35-37.

²¹ Clàr 120; Clàr 124.

²² Clàr 211, pp. 12-14 & pp. 22 and 24.

²³ *Northern Chronicle* 26 September 1883 and 3 October 1883.

him with this particular song. Excerpts from this poem are also quoted by his son in his speech to the Gaelic Society of Inverness in 1872.

Another poem which may have been composed by Robert MacGregor is more controversial, however. In an article entitled 'Songs of Alexander MacGregor', the Rev. Charles M. Robertson discusses two poems attributed to Robert MacGregor's brother.²⁴ The first is *Oran gaoil rinn Alister Mac Ghrigair, Maistir Sgoile Dhul, do Mhaighdean og - a nis a Bhean phòiste*. The second is *Oran molaidh don fhreiceadan dhubh* and he claims that it too was composed by Alexander MacGregor. Robert MacGregor's son, on the other hand, clearly believed that it had been composed by his father, printing it within a prose dialogue and stating that it had been composed 'leis an Urramach Roibeart Mac-Griogair, a bha aon uair 'n a Mhinisteir ann an Cill-Mhuire, 's an Eilean Sgiathanach'.²⁵ He also quoted stanzas from it in the paper to the Gaelic Society of Inverness already mentioned. Robertson dismisses the possibility that Robert was the poem's author on the basis that this poem had already appeared in Turner's Collection of Gaelic songs in 1813, ascribed to Alasdair MacGregor, schoolmaster in Dull, and suggests that accrediting it to his older brother in the *Transactions* may have been an editorial error. He also comments sceptically that Robert 'has even been described as "at one time schoolmaster in Dull"'. As has already been pointed out, Robert MacGregor was indeed schoolmaster in Dull, before his move to Glengairn. Adam Watson in 'Old Gaelic poems in Aberdeenshire' provides even stronger evidence that Robert was the author of this poem, revealing that it appears in the Invercauld papers amongst the songs collected by Robert MacGregor. In this manuscript it is attributed to Robert with the additional comment 'Chuir Maighstir Macan Tuairneir na leabhar e, ann an ainm brathar an fhir a rinn e, le dith toirt fanear', thus suggesting that it had been wrongly attributed to Alexander.²⁶ Watson's argument is strengthened by the fact that Robert's own son was convinced that his father was author. Thus from the evidence we have regarding the activities of Robert MacGregor, it can be seen that Alexander MacGregor came from

²⁴ The Rev. Charles M. Robertson, 'Songs of Alexander MacGregor', *TGSI*, 33 (1925-27), 187-203.

²⁵ *Clàr* 87, pp. 236-37.

²⁶ Watson, p. 31.

a family in which literary pursuits, both collecting and composing, were an acceptable interest for a clergyman.

Robert MacGregor was collecting Gaelic poetry in an area in which Gaelic was becoming the language of a minority of people. The account of the parish in *The Statistical Account of Scotland* states that at the end of the eighteenth century 'their language is English, except in the upper parts of the parishes of Tulloch and Glengairn, where some of them use a barbarous dialect of the Gaelic among themselves, but they all understand the English'.²⁷ It was in this parish that Alexander MacGregor was born on 26 May 1806 at the Mission House, Dalhuil in Glengairn.²⁸ He was the oldest member of the family and the only son to be born to Robert and his wife. They also had three daughters: Margaret, born 31 July 1808; Isabella, born 16 August 1811; Ann Brown, born 20 September 1818.²⁹ The minister of Glengairn, the Rev. Robert Neil, writing to Alexander MacKenzie on the occasion of Alexander MacGregor's death in 1881, says that 'besides preaching in Gaelic and English, his father taught a school through the week, and, as he was possessed of no mean scholarly attainments, he was enabled to impart to his son in early life that sound education which in after days bore such ample fruits'.³⁰

All the obituaries for Alexander MacGregor state that he commenced his studies at King's College, Aberdeen at the age of twelve. Since all his obituaries mistakenly take his date of birth as being 1808, rather than 1806, this would point to his having first matriculated in 1820, and this is confirmed by one obituary which states that he began attending King's College two years before his family moved to Skye in 1822.³¹ If this is true, then he must in actual fact have been fourteen when he began his university studies. Had MacGregor been twelve, however, when he first attended university this would have not been as unusual as it is today. A number of his contemporaries are known to have embarked on university courses at the age of

²⁷ *OSA*, vol. 14, p. 505.

²⁸ All the obituaries written for MacGregor wrongly state that he was born in 1808 and death notices state that he was 73 in the year of his death, 1881. *Fasti* vol. 6, p. 463 gives his date of birth as 26 May 1806 and this is confirmed by the Baptismal Register for Glenmuick, *OPR* 201/1-2, 1806, p. 44. This would have made him 75 when he died.

²⁹ *Fasti*, vol. 8, p. 684.

³⁰ A[lexander] M[acKenzie], 'The Rev. Alexander MacGregor M.A.', *CM*, 74 (1881), 92-99 (p. 94).

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

twelve, in their number men such as Thomas Guthrie and Robert Candlish, who were to be amongst the leading figures in the Free Church.³²

MacGregor's academic career in Aberdeen appears to have been a distinguished one, gaining prizes, as he did, in natural philosophy and mathematics. He is recorded as having graduated Master of Arts in 1827.³³ It was while a student in Aberdeen that he met Ewen MacLachlan, Rector of Aberdeen Grammar School and Librarian of King's College. MacLachlan was a poet and distinguished Gaelic scholar who, amongst other work, had carried out a transcription of the Book of the Dean of Lismore and translated the *Iliad* into Gaelic.³⁴ The manuscripts of verse collected by Robert MacGregor contain one poem entitled *Carn-na-Cuimhne* which has an English translation appended. The manuscript states that this translation was carried out by Ewen MacLachlan of Old Aberdeen and concludes with some comments relating to the translation which MacLachlan had received from Robert MacGregor.³⁵ Clearly, MacLachlan and Robert MacGregor were acquainted, perhaps through Alexander. According to Alexander MacKenzie, writer of the obituary for MacGregor published in the *Celtic Magazine*, the minister would in later years tell how his acquaintance with MacLachlan had 'fanned the natural love which even then existed in his own youthful bosom for the language, literature and antiquities of the Highlanders'.³⁶

In 1822 Robert MacGregor answered a call to the parish of Kilmuir in Trotternish, Skye.³⁷ Contact with his family in Fortingall would have become less frequent, as is demonstrated by one incident involving Robert's brother, Duncan. Duncan Campbell explains that while Robert was in Glengairn, Duncan used to visit him, but that Skye lay outwith the area of his roamings. One winter, however, he decided to visit the family in Skye and reached Portree safely. En route between Portree and Kilmuir wind and snow proved too much for him and he was eventually

³² Ronald S. Blakey, *The Man in the Manse* (Edinburgh, 1978), pp. 13-14.

³³ Peter John Anderson ed., *Officers and Graduates of University and King's College Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1893), p. 283.

³⁴ P. J. Anderson, *Ewen MacLachlan* (Aberdeen, 1918; reprinted from *Aberdeen University Bulletin*, vol. 3, 643-72).

³⁵ Robertson, 'Gaelic poems . . .', pp. 6-12.

³⁶ MacKenzie, p. 95.

³⁷ *Fasti*, vol. 8, p. 684.

forced to give up despite not being far from his destination. In his greatly weakened condition he started to play his pipes, which his brother heard and recognised as his playing, so that he was rescued from the elements.³⁸

Alexander, meanwhile, having completed his studies in Aberdeen in 1827, continued his studies in Edinburgh. Evidence for this comes, not from official records, but from his own writing. In a letter by MacGregor, from which Francis Collinson has quoted in *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland*, the writer states, 'I was in Edinburgh during the winters of 1831, 1832, 1834, and 1835'.³⁹ In Alexander MacGregor's article 'John MacDonald - An adherent of Prince Charles', he confirms that he studied in Edinburgh when he writes, 'during the last four or five years of this interesting veteran's life, I visited him very frequently indeed, while I attended the Divinity Hall in the University of that city. He departed this life in 1835
...'.⁴⁰

The absence of official documentation of Alexander MacGregor's graduation from his divinity studies is normal for the time. Those studying divinity in previous centuries did not receive a degree, indeed the only degrees bestowed in divinity were honorary ones. During MacGregor's course of study, he would have only spent four months in Edinburgh by necessity each year, as this was the length of the session in divinity.⁴¹ The Professor of Divinity during this period was Thomas Chalmers and occupying the Chair of Ecclesiastical History was David Welsh, both of whom, but particularly the former, were to be prominent evangelists who would leave the Established Church in the Disruption of 1843.⁴² Among MacGregor's fellow students in Edinburgh, between 1831 and 1834, was Norman MacLeod, son of the Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod, who was to be a popular preacher and chaplain to Queen Victoria.⁴³

On concluding his studies in Edinburgh, it seems that MacGregor returned to his family in Skye. The *Fasti* indicate that he was ordained at Kilmuir in 1844, his

³⁸ Campbell, pp. 39-40.

³⁹ Francis Collinson, *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland* (London, 1966), p. 193.

⁴⁰ Clàr 236, p. 463.

⁴¹ Mechie, p. 162.

⁴² *DSCHT*, pp. 158 and 860.

⁴³ John Wellwood, *Norman MacLeod* (Edinburgh, 1897), p. 21.

first parish. Evidence exists for his having been based in Kilmuir after completing his studies, from 1837, at least. He himself refers to the fact that in 1837 he carried out a census of the population in his father's parish.⁴⁴ In the *General Assembly Papers* for 1840 it is recorded that the Committee on Gaelic Scriptures included Mr McGregor (Kilmuir).⁴⁵ The contribution on Kilmuir which he wrote for the *New Statistical Account of Scotland* is also dated 1840.⁴⁶ Minutes of the Presbytery of Skye from 1842 also refer to him.⁴⁷ Letters which form part of MacGregor of MacGregor's papers reveal that Alexander had been seeking appointment as Assistant and Successor to his father in Kilmuir, at least as early as 1841. In a letter to the Rev. Dr MacLeod of St Columba's Parish in Glasgow, John Bowie W. S. of Edinburgh, agent to Lord Macdonald, writes in 1841,

I have a letter this morning from our friend Mr. Alexander MacGregor Kilmuir, who is very naturally most anxious to be appointed Assistant and Successor to his father as Minister of Kilmuir, and he mentions that even in the present disturbed state of the Church, he has not the least dread of meeting with opposition were he so fortunate as to receive the presentation. You are well aware that I have for a length of time entertained a very high opinion of Mr. MacGregor, and it will give me great pleasure if I can aid him with reference to his present view. It is matter of notoriety that he takes a deep interest in the lower classes, and with reference to his qualifications in other respects, you know as well as I do, that his attainments are of a very high order. I feel quite satisfied that Lord Macdonald will with pleasure move in the matter.⁴⁸

This clear statement of MacGregor's genuine concern for his parishioners should be borne in mind as a factor underpinning both his writing and his activities during the period of famine and emigration in the 1840s. John Bowie was seeking a letter of testimonial on behalf of MacGregor from Norman MacLeod. This, along with one from Bowie himself, was to be forwarded to Lord Macdonald, proprietor of Kilmuir, to secure MacGregor's presentation to the parish. That some delay occurred

⁴⁴ *NSA*, vol. 14, p. 269.

⁴⁵ SRO, CH1/2/180 *General Assembly Papers*, 1840 p. 7.

⁴⁶ *NSA*, vol. 14, pp. 237-87. Alexander MacKenzie states (Obituary p.96) that MacGregor's contribution was so long that the editor of the *Statistical Account* found it necessary to cut twenty pages from it, although it remained one of the lengthier contributions to this volume.

⁴⁷ SRO, CH2/330/4 Minutes of the Presbytery of Skye, 1842.

⁴⁸ MacGregor of MacGregor Papers. Bundle 194, copy of letter from John Bowie Esquire W.S. Edinburgh to the Revd. Dr. Macleod of St. Columba's Parish, Glasgow, Edinburgh, 29 November 1841.

is evident from a letter by MacGregor, dated some six weeks after the Disruption of 1843. As is evident from MacGregor's letter he remained behind the Establishment and was still seeking appointment to Kilmuir. This letter was addressed to his clan Chief, Sir John Atholl MacGregor. It indicates that he was already in contact with his Chief on the issue of his presentation to Kilmuir. In it he refers to the relief which his appointment would be to his 'frail and aged father' and he requests that Sir John 'earnestly solicit Lord Macdonald to renew his application in my behalf or to use your own powerful influence with the Home Secretary, with Lord Macdonald's recommendation'.⁴⁹ MacGregor's anxiety seems to have been increased by the Disruption, since he expresses the fear that his appointment would not take place until all the other vacancies in the Church might be filled. The Presbytery of Skye saw three of its clergy join the Free Church, the ministers of Bracadale, Snizort and the Small Isles. MacGregor's writings do not touch on the issue of the Disruption so it is difficult to gauge exactly his stance in this religious controversy. The only allusion to the schism in the Church is in one obituary which comments, 'Mr. Macgregor lived in charity with all men, even when the hatred and malice bred of disunion were at their highest'.⁵⁰ Clearly his main concern between 1841 and 1844 was to secure his position and thus that of his aged father.

In April 1844 Alexander MacGregor was ordained as Assistant and Successor to his father.⁵¹ The parish of Kilmuir had a population of 2275 at the time of MacGregor's own census in 1837. The area, like so many other Highland parishes, was overpopulated and suffered greatly during the famines of 1836 and 1837 and then again in the 1840s. MacGregor's concerns about the destitution suffered by many of his parishioners during the famines is discussed in Chapter 5: Famine and Emigration. The welfare of his congregation was not, however, alone in occupying his attention while in Skye. MacKenzie's obituary for him refers to his practice of issuing to his neighbours 'his manuscript magazine, the "Kilmuir Conservative Gazette", written entirely in his own beautiful hand'.⁵² Although no surviving

⁴⁹ Clàr 271.

⁵⁰ 'Death and Funeral of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor'.

⁵¹ SRO, CH2/330/4 Minutes of the Presbytery of Skye, 1844.

⁵² Alexander MacKenzie, p. 95.

examples of these manuscripts have been traced it seems likely that some of the material contained in them appeared amongst his published writings. It was during his period in Kilmuir that his Gaelic writings began to appear in print, first in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* and subsequently in *Fear-Tathaich nam Beann*.

The attachment which he formed to Skye is evident in his choice of pen-names, one of which was Sgiathanach, despite the fact that he had spent the first sixteen years of his life in Aberdeenshire. A number of his writings concern the island which he seems to have adopted as his home. For instance, he wrote in both Gaelic and English about Lachlann Mac Theàrlaich Oig, a poet from Strath in Skye.⁵³ Other articles such as 'An t-Eilean Sgiathanach' and 'Highland and Island scenery' include descriptions of the scenery of Skye, at a time when a new found appreciation of Scottish scenery was drawing ever-increasing numbers of travellers to the Highlands.⁵⁴ In 1879, a paper which he had written entitled, 'Notes on some old customs in the Isle of Skye' was read to The Society of Antiquities of Scotland by Alexander Ross of Inverness.⁵⁵ Of all MacGregor's writings pertaining to Skye, it is, however, for those concerning Flora Macdonald that he is best known. He contributed one Gaelic article about her to *Cuairtear nan Gleann* in 1841 and twelve in English to the *Celtic Magazine* between 1877 and 1881, which were then to appear in one volume under the title *The Life of Flora Macdonald and her Adventures with Prince Charlie* in 1882, the year after MacGregor's death.⁵⁶ MacGregor's biography of Flora is based on information which he himself collected in Skye, as he explains in a letter to the *Northern Chronicle* in 1881:

I flatter myself that there is perhaps no other individual who possesses a more minute knowledge of the whole adventures and history of this distinguished lady than I do. This has arisen from the fact of my having been intimately acquainted with her daughter, Mrs Major Macleod as well as with her granddaughter Miss Mary Macleod of Stein. About half a century ago, I received much information from these ladies about Flora, of which I made full notes at

⁵³ Clàr 79, 81 & 220. For poems by Lachlann Mac Thearlaich Oig see J. MacKenzie, *Sar-obair nam Bard Gaelach* (Glasgow, 1841), pp. 81-84.

⁵⁴ Clàr 103, 237 & 238.

⁵⁵ Clàr 253.

⁵⁶ Clàr 262.

the time, and from which sources the various articles were framed, that have for the last year or two appeared on the pages of the *Celtic Magazine*.⁵⁷

Robert MacGregor died in July 1846.⁵⁸ In December of the same year Alexander married Catherine MacGregor.⁵⁹ Catherine, born in Edinburgh in 1822, was the daughter of Duncan MacGregor, a porter at the Commerical Bank in the High Street, and Ann MacPherson, Edinburgh.⁶⁰ Two of Alexander's sisters were married to men from Skye, one to Dr. L. M. Matheson of Portree and another to James Clow who was a miller, joiner and farmer.⁶¹ Thus, even after Alexander left Skye, he retained links with the island through his sisters.

Although MacGregor had declined a call to Applecross in 1845, while his father was still alive, he accepted a call to the Gaelic Church in Edinburgh in 1850.⁶² William MacKenzie, in *Skye: Iochdar - Trotternish* suggests that a contributing factor to his departure was that the majority of the people had followed the leaders of the Free Church.⁶³ Kilmuir was the last parish in Skye to have a minister of the Free Church appointed to it, in 1864. It was in this year that Lord MacDonald sold his estate, having refused to provide sites for the Free Church on his land. While the charge was vacant, the Rev. Roderick Macleod (Maighstir Ruairidh), the highly popular Skye evangelist, preached frequently in Kilmuir. His parish was Snizort, immediately south of the parish of Kilmuir. In the wake of the Disruption, the

⁵⁷ Clàr 257. Mrs Major Macleod is referred to in Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* vol. 1, pp. 169-70. Carmichael refers to an account of St Bride's Day given by another writer, whose name is not given, in which Mrs Macleod features. It may be that MacGregor himself was Carmichael's anonymous informant.

⁵⁸ *Fasti*, vol. 7, p. 172.

⁵⁹ *Fasti*, vol. 6, p. 463.

⁶⁰ *OPR* 685-1/55, 1822, p. 376. Duncan MacGregor, Commercial Bank, Edinburgh, is listed as a subscriber to Patrick Turner's *Comhchruinneacha do Dh'Orain Taghta Ghaidhealach* (Edinburgh, 1813), p. 393.

⁶¹ William MacKenzie, *Skye: Iochdar - Trotternish* (Glasgow, 1930), p. 133. For a letter from MacGregor to Dr Matheson, see Clàr 276. James Clow is mentioned in Dr Robert MacLagan's manuscript of folklore. A young kinswoman (whose name is not given) tells how Clow dreamt of his future wife - presumably MacGregor's sister - when sleeping with a Bible under his head. See Mrs M. Macleod Banks, *British Calendar Customs: Scotland* vol. 3 (London, 1941), p. 156. Although there is no firm evidence it may be that MacGregor, with his interest in folklore, was in contact with MacLagan. See also fn. 57 regarding possible contact between MacGregor and Alexander Carmichael.

⁶² *Fasti*, vol. 6 p. 463.

⁶³ William MacKenzie, p. 134.

number of adherents to the Free Church was said to number 1300 in Kilmuir alone and by Macleod's own account he preached outside in that parish in all sorts of weather.⁶⁴

MacGregor had, of course already spent some time in Edinburgh as a student and his wife was from Edinburgh, so there may well have been a number of factors contributing to his decision to move there. MacGregor's nomination to the Gaelic Church (St. Oran's) in Edinburgh came from the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge in Scotland, under whose jurisdiction this Gaelic Parish Church for the city lay.⁶⁵ His induction took place in August 1850. The origins of Edinburgh's Gaelic Church date back to 1768 when a church was built between the Grassmarket and Castle Wynd for the purpose of providing for the Gaelic speaking population in the city. The church in which MacGregor preached had been completed in 1808, and was situated in Horse Wynd. After the Disruption there were insufficient members left in the Established Gaelic Church in Edinburgh to merit the services of a minister, but by 1846 the congregation had grown sufficiently to remedy this deficiency.⁶⁶ During MacGregor's time in this charge, he was involved in an issue which stemmed from the schism. Kirk Session records reveal that those who had formed Lothian Road Gaelic Free Church (named St. Columba's Gaelic Free Church in 1864) had retained silver communion cups which the Established Church believed belonged by right to it. The minutes of a meeting of the Kirk Session in January 1853 record that if a renewed request for the return of the cups should prove unsuccessful then the Session would consider employing a legal agent to further its request.⁶⁷ The issue remained unresolved during MacGregor's time in the capital. The minister of the Gaelic Free Church at the time was the Rev. Thomas MacLauchlan, who like MacGregor had a great interest in the literature of the Gaels and involved himself in

⁶⁴ Donald Gillies, *The Life and Work of the Very Reverend Roderick Macleod of Snizort, Skye* (n.d.). See also the Rev. Dr Roderick MacLeod, 'The Bishop of Skye' *TGSI*, 53 (1982-84), 174-209. Macleod's first charge was Bracadale, Skye, from 1823-38. In 1838 he became minister of Snizort where he remained until his death in 1868.

⁶⁵ SRO, CH2/121/24, Minutes of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, 24 April 1850, p. 68.

⁶⁶ W. J. Mackay, 'History of the Highland Church' in *Ceud Bliadhna (A Hundred Years): Edinburgh Highland Church, Cambridge Street 1851-1951* (Edinburgh, 1951), pp. 12-33 (27).

⁶⁷ SRO, CH2/766/4, Gaelic Church Kirk Session Minute Book 1848-63, 4 January 1853.

scholarly work. MacGregor spent a little under three years in Edinburgh and very little information remains regarding his activities during this period.⁶⁸

In 1853 Alexander MacGregor was translated to the West Church in Inverness, to which he was admitted on 13th May.⁶⁹ The West Church in Huntly Street was the second of three charges of the Established Church in Inverness, the others being the High Church and the Gaelic Church. Alexander and his wife had eight children, six of whom survived to adulthood. Their first child, Robert Roy, was born in 1847; Ann MacPherson was born in 1849 and died in 1861; Janet Menzies was born in 1851; Duncan was born in 1853 and died almost exactly a year later in 1854; Margaret Isabella was born in 1855; Duncan Alexander was born in 1857; Catherine was born in 1860; and Ann MacPherson was born in 1862.⁷⁰

It was during MacGregor's years in Inverness that he was most prolific as a writer, whilst still carrying out his pastoral duties. All his obituaries suggest that he worked tirelessly as a minister, one stating, 'He was always in a hurry, visiting the dying, the poor, or the distressed in spirit; going to a marriage, a baptism, or a funeral'.⁷¹ Obituaries, by their nature, are not the most unbiased portrayal of the deceased, but even taking account of this, it is clear that MacGregor was a popular man in Inverness. We are told,

He left those of his cloth who had been cast in a more contracted ecclesiastical mould to thunder out the law. His favourite theme was the Saviour and His Gospel of love and peace to men . . . His large heart, his truly catholic spirit, his boundless charity knew not the mean, selfish, repulsive creed of those that would scarcely admit to Heaven any one but those who could see eye to eye with them in mere matters of ecclesiastical form and ceremony.⁷²

⁶⁸ *The Post-Office Edinburgh and Leith Directory 1851-52* states that the Rev. Alexander MacGregor was resident at Kilmuir House, Grange Road, Edinburgh, showing his attachment for his previous charge.

⁶⁹ *Fasti*, vol. 6, p. 463.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* The names MacPherson and Menzies are the maiden names of maternal and paternal grandmothers respectively. Alexander MacGregor's elder son, Robert Roy MacGregor ISO, was Secretary of the Congested Districts Board for Scotland 1897-1912 and died in 1922. Robert Roy had two sons and a daughter. The older of these sons was Sir Alasdair Duncan Atholl MacGregor (1883-1945) whose posts included Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Hong Kong from 1934. *Who Was Who Vol. IV 1941-1950* (London, 1980) p. 728.

⁷¹ Alexander MacKenzie, p. 92.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

As a preacher, MacGregor does not seem to have demonstrated outstanding abilities, at a time when many of his contemporaries were renowned for their inspirational sermons. One contemporary commentator writes, 'no one pretends that Mr. Macgregor is a great orator; or that there is anything startlingly original or striking in his public exhibitions', although he does go on to say 'his kind and homely manner, his unaffected, earnest, and simple style of speaking go right home to the hearers'.⁷³ The *Northern Chronicle* also describes him as a 'homely preacher'.⁷⁴

In addition to his official duties, his public role led him to be Chaplain for the Asylum in Inverness, Chaplain to St. Mary's Lodge, Chairman of the Inverness Dispensary for the Poor, an examiner at annual school examinations and 'more or less connected with most of the charitable institutions in the town'.⁷⁵ Yet in spite of both his pastoral and public duties, MacGregor still found time to write a vast number of essays, articles and dialogues. His effective management of time enabled him to fulfil his duties while also pursuing his literary interests. His obituaries testify that he was in the habit of rising around five in the morning and devoting attention to literary pursuits before breakfast, leaving the remainder of the day for his pastoral duties.⁷⁶ It is also recorded that he was in the habit of keeping a diary, although no trace of this has been discovered in the course of researching this thesis.

At some point following his arrival in Inverness, MacGregor was approached by Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte, at whose request he translated the *Apocrypha* into Gaelic.⁷⁷ Prince Louis Lucien was a nephew of Napoleon, living in England, whose consuming interest was philology. Victor Collins, who compiled *A Catalogue of all the publications of the late Prince Louis-Lucien Bonaparte*, explains that Bonaparte was motivated by a desire to preserve 'dying dialects for posterity' and that his philological interests included 'the manner of speech of the British yokel, of the French peasant, of the Basque mountaineer, of the Italian workman, of the Corsican

⁷³ 'Hebridean manners and customs' - an account of a lecture given by Alexander MacGregor, *TH*, 21 February 1874, p. 5.

⁷⁴ 'Death and funeral of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor'.

⁷⁵ 'Death of the Rev. Alex. MacGregor, West Church, Inverness', *Inverness Advertiser*, 21 October 1881.

⁷⁶ 'The Late Rev. Alexander MacGregor', *TH*, November 1881, p. 185.

⁷⁷ Clàr 267. 250 copies were printed.

and Sardinian islander'.⁷⁸ The catalogue details translations which Bonaparte had commissioned into dialects of Basque, Italian, French, Finnish and Spanish amongst others. It even includes *The Song of Solomon* translated into twenty-two dialects of English and into Scots. The only translation of the *Apocrypha* which he commissioned was into Scottish Gaelic. According to Collins he sought out the 'the best living authorities on each dialect' and employed them to carry out translations on his behalf.⁷⁹

How Bonaparte was introduced to MacGregor is not known; however, MacGregor had carried out two works of translation into Gaelic before 1860 when the *Apocrypha* was published. In 1846 his translation of Sir Thomas Dick Lauder's *Directions for Taking and Curing Herring* had appeared in print followed by Samuel Baker's *A Few Words of advice to the mariners of England* in 1854.⁸⁰ It may have been these translations which led Bonaparte to MacGregor. The task which MacGregor took on was no small one, the finished edition numbering 202 pages, and apparently taking two years to complete.⁸¹ The choice of the *Apocrypha* is in itself interesting. These deuterocanonical books which belong between the Old and New Testaments do not form part of the canon of the Protestant churches in Scotland, being rejected by the Westminster Confession. Indeed, a controversy had arisen in Scotland in the 1820s regarding the inclusion of the *Apocrypha* in Bibles being distributed by Bible Societies. The result was a split between the Scottish Bible Societies and the British and Foreign Bible Society in London, with the former opting for exclusion of the twelve books of the *Apocrypha*.⁸² MacGregor would doubtless have been aware of this controversy surrounding the text which he was asked to translate, but had no personal problem with translating the books into

⁷⁸ Victor Collins, *A Catalogue of all the publications of the late Prince Louis-Lucien Bonaparte to aid in the comparative study of European languages* (Paris, 1902), pp. vii-viii.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. viii.

⁸⁰ Clàr 265 & 266. The first of these publications contains a letter from the Rev. Dr. Norman MacLeod of St. Columba's in Glasgow stating that 'the translation is excellent' and a letter from MacGregor himself in which he writes 'I would almost feel ashamed to give a statement of the time which I found cause to expend on the translation. As it was a work which I considered might benefit future generations, I deemed it my duty to spare neither time nor trouble in doing it all the justice in my power.'

⁸¹ *Biographies of Highland Clergymen*, p. 74.

⁸² *DSCHT*, p. 19 and pp. 71-72.

Gaelic. Since the Old and New Testaments had already been translated into Gaelic, this would have presented him with a substantial exercise in translation, and he may have viewed it as being no more than that.

Also during his time in Inverness, Alexander MacGregor made the acquaintance of Mary MacPherson (Màiri Mhòr nan Oran), the acclaimed Gaelic poetess. It is possible that he may already have known her family from his time in Skye, as she was born in Skeabost in the neighbouring parish to Kilmuir in 1821 and spent her youth there. In 1872, Màiri was convicted of theft, something which she always denied, and was imprisoned for forty days. There were those who believed in her innocence, such as John Murdoch of the *Highlander* and Charles Fraser MacIntosh. It seems that Alexander MacGregor was among her supporters, as the following lines, from the elegy which she composed to him, suggest:

Nuair chaidh mise chàradh air sgeir gu'm bhàthadh,
Le truaghan Bàillidh, gun ghràdh na chóm;
Chuir thusa bàta, le sgioba 's ràimh dhomh,
'Nuair dh'fhàg a phàirt ud mi bhàn sa' pholl.⁸³

The implication in the third line would seem to be that MacGregor was in some way instrumental in 'rescuing' Màiri from prison, although in exactly what way is not clear.

The intellectual climate in Inverness during MacGregor's time there was clearly one which afforded MacGregor the opportunities to pursue his interests in Gaelic language and literature, and to associate with like-minded people. The Gaelic Society of Inverness was founded in 1871, and MacGregor was an active member, often addressing its annual meetings. On 4 August 1880 he was elected an Honorary Chieftain of the Society, a position which he shared with Sir Kenneth Mackenzie of Gairloch, Professor John Stuart Blackie and Charles Fraser-Mackintosh M.P.⁸⁴ At meetings of the Society he would have encountered, and indeed shared a platform with, some of the foremost experts on Gaelic language and literature, such as Blackie, Alexander Carmichael and the Rev. Alexander Stewart ('Nether-Lochaber'). He contributed to John Murdoch's radical weekly paper the *Highlander* and to

⁸³ *Marbhrann do'n Urramach Alastair Mac-Griogair* in Màiri Nic-a-Phearsoin, *Dain agus Orain Ghàidhlig* (Inverness, 1891), pp. 156-57 (157). This elegy is to be found in Appendix 5.

⁸⁴ *TGSI*, 9 (1880-81), 136.

Duncan Campbell's *Northern Chronicle*. MacGregor's name, along with that of Alexander MacKenzie, appeared as one of the conductors of the *Celtic Magazine* on the title page of its first volume in 1875. MacKenzie or 'The Clach' was a prolific writer on the history of Highland clans and was editor of the Inverness based paper the *Scottish Highlander* (1885-98).⁸⁵ MacGregor was said to be 'an excellent performer on the great Highland bagpipes and on the violin' and was also a regular judge in the piping competitions of the Northern Meeting in Inverness.⁸⁶ Inverness offered him the chance to participate first-hand in the Gaels' renewed sense of confidence and he in turn played his part in this revival of interest in all things Gaelic. MacGregor has also been referred to by the late Rev. Dr John MacInnes as a Gaelic poet, but since no further evidence has been found to substantiate this claim, it is as a writer of Gaelic prose and a writer in English on Highland topics that MacGregor falls to be considered.⁸⁷

In September, 1881 MacGregor visited his son, Duncan, a doctor in Huddersfield, and they paid a visit to London. This experience resulted in an article entitled 'An "Sgiathanach" Coir an Lunainn' appearing in the *Celtic Magazine*.⁸⁸ Reference is also made to it in one of his last prose dialogues to be published. One of the characters, Coinneach, says lightheartedly, of 'an Seann Sgiathanach', 'tha 'n duine bochda (*sic*) beò fhathast, ach o chionn seachduin no dha thug e Sasunn air . . .'⁸⁹ A month later, on 19 October 1881, Alexander MacGregor died at his home, 4 Victoria Terrace, Inverness at the age of seventy-five, having been struck by paralysis six days previously. The attendance at his funeral testifies to the esteem in which he was held by the town in which he had lived for the last twenty-nine years of his life:

Along the route spectators lined the sides of the streets. The town bells and those of the High and West Churches were tolled. Shops, banks, and places of

⁸⁵ D. E. Meek, *Màiri Mhór nan Oran* (Glasgow, 1977), p. 135.

⁸⁶ Alexander MacKenzie, p. 97.

⁸⁷ John MacInnes, 'The Christian Church' in *The Hub of the Highlands* (Inverness, 1975), pp. 155-70 states on p.167 that MacGregor was 'a Gaelic poet, a good Highland historian and a winning preacher'. MacGregor was clearly interested in Highland history as demonstrated by his *Life of Flora Macdonald*, his lecture which appeared in the 1907 edition of *The Feuds of the Clans* and two or three historical tales. See Clàr 262 & 264.

⁸⁸ Clàr 251.

⁸⁹ Clàr 259.

business were closed. In short, business was universally suspended, and it might be said that almost all the population was in the streets. Nothing could be simpler and nothing more impressive than the manner in which Inverness paid its last tribute to the man who had so long gone in and out among its people, unostentatiously doing good and making friends of all and enemies of none.⁹⁰

A self-portrait in prose of MacGregor reveals a man who did not take himself too seriously, as the following dialogue excerpt from 1879 demonstrates,

Ach co a chunnaic mi, mar an ceudna, ach ar caraaid an Seann Sgiathanach bochd, agus ma chunnaic, b'e sin an creutair iosal, cutach - duinneachan ro bheag, a tha co leathann 'sa tha e co fad. Tha e tiugh, cruinn, gramail, mar bharailte-sgadain, agus gun a bhi a' bheag n'is airde! . . .⁹¹

⁹⁰ 'Death and Funeral of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor', p. 6.

⁹¹ Clàr 216, p. 14.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEMPORARY BACKGROUND

As a prelude to discussing Alexander MacGregor and his work, this chapter will briefly consider the period in which MacGregor was writing in order to convey a sense of those events and forces which influenced his life and thoughts. Some of these affected nineteenth century Britain in general, some just Scotland, and others were specific to the Highlands and were to have varying degrees of impact upon him as a writer. The nineteenth century is a complex period and this chapter can go no further than give an overview of some of the century's defining events and developments, some of which will then be picked up on in later chapters when they impinge upon MacGregor's work. First and foremost, this was a period of unprecedented changes - changes which affected virtually every aspect of life, and nowhere more so than in the Highlands of Scotland. MacGregor himself, writing in 1878, alludes to this. 'Tha sinn a' teachd beo ann an saoghal iongantach, aimhreiteach, far nach fhurast do dhuine ionraic, coir, ceart-inntinneach, a chasan a chumail'.¹

One of the most disruptive types of change which characterised the nineteenth century was that of population movement. In the Highlands this took the form of migration and emigration, whether by choice or by force. Neither migration nor emigration was a phenomenon new to the nineteenth century Highlands, seasonal migration to the Lowlands having become the norm for many Gaels in the course of the eighteenth century, and emigration having started at least as early as the 1730s with Gaels settling in North Carolina. What distinguished the movements of the nineteenth century was the unprecedented scale on which Highlanders were leaving their native land in their thousands to settle in the Lowlands, Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia. This exodus, which in the eighteenth century tended to be the choice of the people, was in the nineteenth century more often than not forced upon them by circumstances, or in some cases by landlords as the Highland economy was commercialised. As is discussed in Chapter 5, landlords were

¹ Clàr 174, p. 3.

willing accomplices in allowing sub-letting and population growth in the early decades of the nineteenth century, in order to maximise their profits from the kelp industry as well as from the fishing industry and cattle, during what was effectively a wartime economic boom. The result was that the Highlands became what Tom Devine has described as an 'enclave of British industry', which was dependent on external markets for its prosperity.² When kelp ceased to be profitable in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, in addition to the dramatic fall in cattle prices and the failure of the fishing industry, the result was a population vulnerable to crop failure and famine, as happened in 1836 and again in 1846-47. This redundancy of population brought about by the failure of the kelp industry and the introduction of sheep farming resulted in mass emigration, particularly in the 1840s. Between 1846 and 1857 over 16,500 Gaels emigrated with financial aid from landlords and from the Highlands and Islands Emigration Society.³ Some of this was marked by clearance as on the estates of Colonel Gordon in Benbecula, South Uist and Barra, but equally much was undertaken willingly by Gaels. Although there were instances of resistance to landlords' evictions, it was not until the 1870s that there was any concerted resistance, such as the Bernera Riot of 1874 and the Battle of the Braes in 1883, which achieved national publicity for the crofters' cause. This new confidence in the Gaels' rights as tenants is evidenced in the Gaelic poetry of the period which praises pro-crofter MPs, satirises the enemies of the crofters' campaign and exhorts Gaels to vote for pro-crofter candidates.⁴ Legislative change in the shape of the Ballot Act of 1872, which put an end to the open ballot, and the Third Reform Act of 1884, which brought crofters into the electorate, loosened the landed classes' grip on the legislative system to the extent that five pro-crofting candidates were returned in the Election of 1885, and in 1886 the Crofters' Holdings (Scotland) Act was passed.⁵

Parallels with the land campaign are to be found in the 1870s campaign for Gaelic to be given a place in Highland schools. After centuries of the Gaelic

² T. M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War: the Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands* (Manchester, 1994), p. 51. See also James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976).

³ Tom Devine, *The Great Highland Famine* (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 201.

⁴ Donald E. Meek ed., *Tuath is Tighearna: Tenants and Landlords* (Edinburgh, 1995), pp. 26-34.

⁵ I. M. M. MacPhail, *The Crofters' War* (Stornoway, 1989), pp. 147-50.

language being eroded by an education system controlled from outwith the Highlands, this became an issue which attracted the attention of pro-crofting campaigners, the one lending weight to the other. The political marginalisation of Gaelic since the Statutes of Iona of 1609 has been studied by Charles Withers in *Gaelic in Scotland 1698-1981*, in which he traces those measures taken both by government and educational bodies to replace Gaelic with English.⁶ If educational provision in the Highlands from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century is considered, the cumulative effect of the anti-Gaelic policies of the various bodies involved becomes more readily understood. Parochial schools provided for by the 1695 Act for Settling Schools, and which were not established in many parts of the Highlands, excluded Gaelic except as a means of understanding English.⁷ The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK), set up in 1709, moved from a position of initially allowing Gaelic to be used until English was understood, to banning the use of Gaelic in its schools. The fact that in 1766 it allowed schoolmasters in Gaelic speaking areas to teach pupils to read both Gaelic and English should not be seen as a sign of a softening in its attitude to the language. Rather this was aimed at counteracting the problem of children not understanding what they were taught by rote-learning through English.⁸ The Edinburgh Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools (also known as Sgoilean Chrìosd), established in 1811, taught the Scriptures through the medium of Gaelic, but this is more indicative of its concern for the spiritual well-being of the Gaels than its attitude to their native language. Withers has suggested that, in actual fact, the presence of these schools actually fuelled demand for the teaching of English.⁹ The third type of schools which was established from 1825 were Church schools such as those of the General Assembly which, although teaching both Gaelic and English, did so with the furtherance of English as their goal.¹⁰ For these educational bodies Gaelic was acceptable as the language of religion, but no more. This long term denigration of Gaelic and the emphasis on English as the language of social and economic

⁶ Charles W. J. Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland 1698-1981* (Edinburgh, 1984).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-28.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-47.

advancement can be seen as the underpinning feature of what Michael Hechtner has referred to as 'internal colonialism'.¹¹ Internal stability was achieved by anglicisation, the promotion of English language, institutions and cultural values, and one of the main vehicles of this anglicisation was the education system. Only in the 1870s, in the wake of the Education Act of 1872 which ignored Gaelic, and in a climate of raised expectations and awareness of the Gaels' rights, did language become a campaigning issue, often cited in tandem with the issue of land rights.

Urban Gaels played an important part in the campaign for crofters' rights, being in closer proximity to national newspapers and the centres of power. The diaspora had greatly altered the demography of Gaelic speakers, with significant numbers of Gaels abroad and in Lowland cities. Their geographical distribution changed the dynamics of Gaelic society, which had previously been almost exclusively rural, and to which were now added international and urban dimensions. It is difficult to ascertain the number of Gaels resident in the industrial belt of Scotland during the nineteenth century, since the first concrete statistics available are from the first census, carried out in 1881. This reveals that 10,513 Gaelic speakers were registered in Lanarkshire (mostly in Glasgow), 5190 in Renfrewshire and 2142 in Midlothian.¹² By the 1870s there existed a network of Highland societies in the Lowlands, from the all-encompassing Glasgow Highland Association to local societies such as the Glasgow Skye Association, the Edinburgh Sutherlandshire Association and An Comunn Ieach. Withers lists thirty-seven such organisations in Glasgow alone in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹³ Although outwith the Lowlands, perhaps the leading organisation was the Gaelic Society of Inverness, established in 1871 with the aim of promoting the Gaelic language and literature, past and present. These societies presented opportunities for meeting and discussing issues, and for promoting the Gaelic language both in and outwith the Highlands. In them Gaels found cohesion and co-ordination which strengthened their voice, and

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 151-56.

¹¹ Michael Hechtner, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (London, 1975).

¹² Withers, p. 212.

¹³ Charles W. J. Withers, 'On the Geography and Social History of Gaelic' in *Gaelic and Scotland: Alba agus a' Ghàidhlig*, ed. by William Gillies, (Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 101-30 (125).

their importance should not be underestimated when considering the increasingly vociferous Gaelic movement of the later nineteenth century.

The press must be seen as one of the single most important factors in achieving a heightened profile for the Highlands in the 1870s and in increasing the confidence of the pro-crofter voice. Newspapers such as the *Highlander*, the *Oban Times* and later the *Scottish Highlander* and journals such as *An Gaidheal* and the *Celtic Magazine*, to varying degrees, gave coverage to issues of land and language rights and opened new channels of criticism and debate. Here again the role of the urban Gael is evident. It has been observed that periodicals are primarily urban forms,¹⁴ and so it is no coincidence that the change in the distribution of Gaelic speakers coincided with the emergence of a Gaelic press. Gaels began to turn improvements in printing technology and increasing levels of literacy to their advantage, and this placed them on a more level playing field with the landlords whom they opposed and who had such papers as the *Scotsman* and the *Inverness Courier* putting their case. John Murdoch's weekly newspaper the *Highlander*, first published in 1873, epitomises the new-found confidence emerging in the Highlands. Murdoch provided a means by which grievances concerning the Highlands and Highlanders' circumstances could be voiced and discussed sympathetically. Tenants' fears of reprisal were to some extent offset by landlords' fears of adverse publicity. A report of a speech made by Murdoch at a meeting of tenants in Loch Boisdale suggests as much. 'They [the tenants] were, no doubt, as they confessed, afraid of landlord &c., but they were not more so than landlords and factors were of public opinion'.¹⁵ No less a figure than the Duke of Argyll was reminded through the pages of the *Highlander* of his duty to his tenantry when it became known that a substantial part of his estate was to be turned over to game and sport.¹⁶ The press can be seen as going some way to filling the role which had previously been the poets', and which still was to some extent, in commenting on events affecting the Gaels and encouraging them on a course of action.

¹⁴ Helen Fraser with Daniel Brown, *English Prose of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1997), p. 5.

¹⁵ *TH*, 5 June 1875, p. 7.

¹⁶ Editorial, *TH*, 6 December 1873, p. 4.

The Church was as much affected by change as any part of Highland society in the nineteenth century. In fact the Disruption of May 1843, which split the Church into Free Church and Established Church, has been described as 'the most momentous event in nineteenth century Scottish history'.¹⁷ At the root of the schism was the issue of intrusion, the right of a heritor to present his choice of minister whether or not the congregation agreed with this choice. It was not a wholly nineteenth century issue, having resulted in secessions in the eighteenth century, but it was in the nineteenth century that opposition to it had such far reaching results. By and large it was the evangelicals who opposed intrusion, the moderates tending to support the rights of patrons. In 1834, the evangelically dominated General Assembly passed a Veto Act which allowed parishioners to refuse a heritor's choice of minister. In practice, however, the Veto Act was overturned by the Court of Session, raising the issue of the Church's spiritual independence. This culminated in the Disruption in which 454 ministers out of 1195 left the Established Church to form the Free Church. Repercussions were not restricted to the Church, which was now requiring to provide double the number of ministers it had previously needed, but were felt in education, of which the Church was a major provider, and in poor relief. The gulf between moderates and evangelicals, dating back to the eighteenth century, was not limited to the issue of intrusion, but involved an inherent difference in outlook. As one commentator has written, 'while the Moderates were too "this-worldly" to engage in any serious social criticism, the Evangelicals were too "other-worldly" to do so'.¹⁸ Generalisations about moderates abound, many of which are less than flattering comments directed at them by those of an evangelical persuasion, which suggest that moderates were too concerned with cultivating their often sizeable glebes, that their sermons were less than inspiring (and that they often read them, which was anathema to evangelicals, hence the name 'ministearan pàipeir' given to moderates). They were also accused of intemperance and socialising too frequently.¹⁹ Much of this bad press emanated from evangelicals and focuses on extreme cases.

¹⁷ Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London, 1991), p. 397.

¹⁸ Donald C. Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest: Social Criticism in the Scottish Church 1830-1945* (New York, 1987), p. 22.

Evangelicals, on the other hand, were more preoccupied by the spiritual than by the secular, and placed great importance on 'inspirational delivery' in their preaching.²⁰ The divisions between moderate and evangelical are, however, less clear cut than such definitions would suggest, and ministers must be assessed on an individual basis, resulting in some meeting criteria from both sides of the moderate-evangelical divide.

The Gaels, like the rest of the British population, were having to adapt to keep pace with a changing world in which technological advances were industrialising society; in which advances in communications and travel brought what had previously been remote areas closer to the main centres of population; in which scientific advances expanded people's understanding of their world; in which archaeological excavations of ancient civilisations changed the Victorians' view of their own places in history.²¹ Like their fellow Britons, the dimensions of the world in which nineteenth century Gaels were living were constantly expanding. One of the effects of this and of the large scale population movement of the period was the destabilising of people's relationship with the past, upon which they depend for security, identity, history, language and customs. Robert Hewison has pointed out that rapid change can disrupt this relationship with the past, and can undermine the value of the past.²² The result is nostalgia which seeks to rebuild this relationship between present and past. Through recourse to nostalgia, looking back to the halcyon days of the past, Gaels attempted to come to terms with clearance and emigration, by stabilising the past in a way in which they were unable to control the present. One way in which this nostalgic impulse is apparent is in the desire to preserve a past which is perceived to be vanishing, in order to preserve a collective sense of identity. In the nineteenth century Highlands this manifests itself in nostalgic verse which tends to portray an idealised and sanitised past before the clearances. It is also evident in the upsurge of interest in collecting and thus preserving oral literature,

¹⁹ See Kenneth MacDonald, *Social and Religious Life in the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1902); Ronald S. Blakey, *The Man in the Manse* (Edinburgh, 1978), pp. 3-10.

²⁰ *DSCHT*, p. 671.

²¹ See for example, Richard D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas* (London, 1973), pp. 99-101.

²² Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London, 1987), pp. 43-45.

proverbs and popular beliefs, conducted by men such as John Francis Campbell, Alexander Carmichael and John Gregorson Campbell in the second half of the nineteenth century. This nostalgic movement was not restricted to the Highlands, but also to some extent dictated external perceptions of the Highlands, in the wake of the romanticisation of the region occasioned by the publication of MacPherson's *Ossian* in the eighteenth century and by changing attitudes to Highland landscape. Industrialised societies in Britain and elsewhere saw in the Highlands remnants of a pre-industrial past through which they sought escape from the present.

The nineteenth century might be categorised as one of polarities: city and countryside, past and present, landlords and tenants, moderates and evangelicals, Gaelic and English, a world in which confidence in an age of progress and civilisation went hand in hand with instability and uncertainty. It was in this environment that Alexander MacGregor lived and wrote, and his response to the multi-faceted aspects of the society of which he was a part will be considered as it is seen in his writing.

¹ The difference between a review and a critique has been explained by John Wilson and Willie Griffiths. *Reviews and Critiques: Critical and Creative in the History of Scottish Literature* vol. 2, ed. by Thomas Clancy (Edinburgh, 2002), p. 10. The title page of *MacGregor's Magazine* is designed as a double for both review and critique, which is the character and the purpose of all new literature.

² Donald John MacLennan, *Scottish Fiction, 1800, to 1840*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh, 1962), *MacGregor's Magazine and Other Writings*, 1962, p. 10. *MacGregor's Magazine*, 1840-41.

³ Derek S. Thomson, *The Making of the Contemporary Scottish Novel*, ed. by Derek S. Thomson (Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 222-23.

CHAPTER 3

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY GAELIC PERIODICAL PRESS

The emergence of a Gaelic periodical press in the nineteenth century coincided with a flourishing of the press as a whole in Britain, whether in the form of the review, the magazine or the newspaper.¹ It is important to be aware of it in this context and not as a phenomenon which evolved in a wholly Gaelic environment. Those involved in editing and writing for the Gaelic press were literate members of Gaelic-speaking society who would have had access to English-language journals and may have found inspiration in them for their own writing in Gaelic. This section will outline the main Gaelic periodicals from the nineteenth century, paying particular attention to those to which Alexander MacGregor contributed and will discuss some of the other writers whose work appeared in them while giving an overview of the types of writing involved.

No extensive study of nineteenth century Gaelic periodicals has been carried out to date and it is not the purpose of this thesis to do so. Donald John MacLeod's paper 'Gaelic Prose' includes a survey of the main Gaelic journals published in the nineteenth century, but with very little commentary on any, and more recently Kenneth MacDonald has discussed those Gaelic periodicals published in Glasgow in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.² The entry on periodicals in *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland* also contains an extensive listing of such periodicals.³

The first Gaelic periodical to be published in the nineteenth century was *An Rosroine* of which only four numbers were published (in Glasgow in 1803), foreshadowing the short life span which was to afflict all nineteenth century Gaelic periodicals. A gap of twenty-six years followed before the first of two waves of Gaelic journals appeared in print. These two waves fall roughly into the periods

¹ The difference between a review and a magazine has been explained by Joan Milne and Willie Smith, 'Reviews and Magazines: Criticism and Polemic' in *The History of Scottish Literature* vol. 3, ed. by Douglas Gifford (Aberdeen, 1988), pp. 189-201 (189). They state that the review is designed as a means for criticising literature, both new and old, whereas the magazine was the propagator of new literature.

² Donald John MacLeod, 'Gaelic Prose', *TGSI*, 49 (1974-76), 198-230; Kenneth D. MacDonald, 'Glasgow and Gaelic Writing', *TGSI*, 57 (1990-92), 395-428.

³ Derick S. Thomson, 'Periodicals' in *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland* ed. by Derick S. Thomson, (Oxford, 1983), pp. 223-24.

1829-1850 and 1870-1880. The first of these periodicals was *An Teachdaire Gaelach* (1829-1831) followed by *Cuairtear nan Gleann* (1840-1843). Both of these were established and edited by the Rev. Dr. Norman MacLeod. *Fear-Tathaich nam Beann* (1848-1850) was edited by his son-in-law, the Rev. Dr. Archibald Clerk. Alexander MacGregor is known to have contributed to the second and third of these. Also in this first wave of publication was *An Teachdaire Ur Gaidhealach* (1835-1836) edited by Lachlan MacLean and *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal* (1844-1848) edited by John Forbes.⁴ As far as can be ascertained, MacGregor did not make any contributions to these two journals. However, given that he is known to have published articles anonymously in Caraid nan Gaidheal's journals, he cannot be completely ruled out as a possible contributor. A barren period followed, possibly due in part to divisions amongst the clergy who had been the mainstay of Gaelic writing in the first half of the century, but also perhaps due to the struggle for survival which faced all Gaelic journals. This gap accounts for the lack of writing published by MacGregor between 1850 and 1871, as he found himself deprived of outlets for his prose. It came to an end with the appearance of *An Gaidheal* (1871-1877), which started its life in Canada under the editorship of Angus Nicholson before it emigrated to Scotland. Also published at this time was *Bratach na Fìrinn* (1872-1874). John Murdoch's *Highlander* (1873-1881) had a regular Gaelic column, as did the *Northern Chronicle*. The *Celtic Magazine* (1875-1888) established by Alexander MacKenzie and Alexander MacGregor was for the most part conducted through the medium of English, with only the occasional article in Gaelic. MacGregor's contributions appeared in all but *Bratach na Fìrinn*.

The content of these periodicals was dictated to a great extent by the aims of those who established and edited them. The flourishing of periodical publishing in Britain as a whole was inextricably linked to the increase in literacy of the population and the same was true of the Gaelic press. Caraid nan Gaidheal was one of those involved in setting up General Assembly Schools in the Highlands and was thus aware of the need to make reading material in Gaelic available to those being

⁴ MacLeod, pp. 203-04.

educated in these and other schools. In his introduction to the first number of *An Teachdaire Gaelach* he makes reference to the General Assembly schools and those of the Gaelic Schools' Society which were providing education for thousands of Gaels. This presented new opportunities for the use of Gaelic in print, as MacLeod himself comments. 'Tha dòchas againn gun d'fhàinig a nis an t-àm, anns am feudar feum ni's coitchionta a dheanamh do'n Ghaelich mar chànmhuinn sgriobhta, na rinneadh fhathast, arson math na muinntir aig nach 'eil cainnt ach i; agus arson riarachas inntinn gach aon leis an ionmhuinn i, mar chainnt bhlasda an òige'.⁵ The agenda was clear, that as long as Gaelic was still the language of the Highlands, the availability of Gaelic in print was a necessity, as MacLeod indicates when he states:

Ged a tha bheurla air a labhairt le mòran sna cearnaibh sin, agus ged is ro iomchuidh gum buadhaicheadh i ni's mò agus ni's mò, gidheadh 's i Ghaelich fhathast cainnt na dùthcha . . . fhad's as ann leatha mhàin is urrainnear an cinn a shoilleireachadh, an cridheachan a bhlàitheachadh, 's ann innt a dh'fheumar eolas a thairgse dhoibh . . .⁶

MacLeod also communicated his intention of using his journals as a means of attending to the spiritual welfare of his readers, writing, 'B'e 'n amaideachd gu dearbh anns an oidhirp tha mhiann oirnn a thabhairt airson maith ar luchd-dùthcha, an t-eòlas sin a thoirt doibh a bhios feumail fad thri fichead bliadhna 's a deich, agus dearmad a dheanamh air an eòlas tha feumail chum beatha nach teirig gu suthainn'.⁷ Immediately following this foreword to the first number of *Cuairtear nan Gleann* MacLeod specifically addresses Highland ministers, indicating the significance of the clergy for the survival of the journal. 'Tha sinn ag amharc 'ionnsuidh cléir na Gàidhealtachd airson còmhnaidh agus deagh rùin; Mur toill sinn sin tha fios againn nach fhada ghleidheas sinn ar casan . . .'.⁸

The new opportunities which Gaelic periodicals afforded the Highland clergy was consistent with the situation elsewhere in Britain. David Vincent in *Literacy and Popular Culture* refers to the way in which the boom in mass communication in the form of the printed word provided 'a means of extending the authority of the minister

⁵ 'A luchd duthcha ar cridhe agus ar gaoil', *TG*, 1 (1829), 1-3 (p. 2).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷ 'An Roimh-radh', *CG*, 1 (1840), 1-5 (p. 4).

⁸ 'Do mhinistearibh an t-soisgeil air feadh na Gàidhealtachd', *CG*, 1 (1840), 5-7 (p. 6).

far beyond the pulpit'.⁹ As mentioned previously, the editors of the main Gaelic periodicals pre-1850 were ministers, as were a number of the contributors such as Alexander MacGregor. It is difficult to ascertain exactly how many of the contributors were ministers since virtually all wrote under pen-names or anonymously, something which was common to Gaelic and English publications of the period. The contents of *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, however, reflect the fact that to some extent MacLeod did use his journal as a means of extending the pulpit. In the fourth issue, for example, approximately one third of the pages are devoted to writing of a religious nature, including an anonymous allegorical piece, 'Na Seudan Luachmhor', and another anonymous piece entitled 'An Trionaid Ghlòrmhor', and a translated hymn, 'Eaglais Chrìosd'.¹⁰ The anonymous pieces may in fact have been written by MacLeod himself, the initial G.U., gun ùghdar, possibly concealing the true extent of his own contributions. By the third year of its publication a sermon was appearing in every issue, the importance placed on it indicated by the fact it was always the first piece of writing in the journal, effectively taking the place of an editorial.

The short life of *Cuairtear nan Gleann* may have resulted in part from the fact that it was so closely linked to the Church. In the first number Caraid nan Gaidheal made reference to the fact that there were problems within the Church, but at the same time stating clearly his stance as editor of this new publication, 'cha ruig sinn a leas taobh seach taobh a ghabhail anns a' chonnsachadh so'.¹¹ *Cuairtear* ceased publication in 1843, the same year as the Disruption. It may be that the schism in the Church affected the flow of contributions or the sales of the journal. It is clear that even before the Disruption MacLeod was not receiving as much support from the clergy as he would have wished for his journal. He expresses gratitude to ministers in America for their endeavours and regrets that those closer to home are not doing enough. It is likely, however, that this was merely one of a number of factors which had a detrimental affect on the publication. *An Teachdaire Gaelach* had ceased

⁹ David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 175.

¹⁰ 'Na Seudan Luachmhor', *CG*, 4 (1840), 73-77; 'An Trionaid Ghlòrmhor', 90-92; 'Eaglais Chrìosd', 92-93.

¹¹ 'Do mhinisteiribh an t-soisgeil air feadh na Gaidhealtachd', p. 7.

publication in 1832 as a result of the ill-health of MacLeod. The pressures of conducting a monthly publication may have been taking their toll on his health. In the final number of *An Teachdaire* he explains 'o mheadhon a gheamhraidh so chaidh seachad, cha robh e 'm chomas, le briste beag a thainig air mo shlàinte, dleasdanas mo sgìreachd a choimhlionadh mar bu mhiann leam, agus tha mi 'mothuchadh gur h-éiginn domh - a dheòin no dh'aindeoin, sgr de'n Teachdaire car tamuill'.¹² Another problem which faced MacLeod's publications is to be found in the pages of the *Cuairtear*. In February 1842 MacLeod states that he cannot guarantee that he will be able to continue producing the periodical for another year, explaining, 'Cha'n eil an t-argiod a' tighinn a stigh mar bu chòir dha, agus tha 'n cosdas tròm'.¹³ Until the Repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855 all journals carrying news, as *Cuairtear nan Gleann* did, were subject to the payment of a Stamp Duty which thus inflated their price. A similarly restrictive measure enacted by the government, in its attempts to control the press, was the imposition of a tax on advertisements, thus reducing the amount of money which the proprietors of papers and journals could raise by this means.¹⁴ This could only have exacerbated any other financial problems affecting Gaelic periodicals. The advertising content of the *Cuairtear* was virtually non-existent, consisting of the occasional advertisement for books, the advertising of steamer timetables on the West Coast and free passage abroad for prospective emigrants.

As has been observed, a significant portion of contributions addressed the spiritual needs of readers. The remainder of *Cuairtear* consisted of a wide-ranging mixture of writings such as dialogues, information on emigrant destinations, Highland tales, informative essays and news. One of the most prolific contributors to MacLeod's publications was Lachlan MacLean, a Glasgow shopkeeper from Coll, already mentioned as editor of *An Teachdaire Ur Gaidhealach*.¹⁵ Many of his writings were historical such as his series on William Wallace and Rob Roy

¹² Tormod MacLeòid, 'Chum leughadair an Teachdaire Ghaelaich', *TG*, 24 (1831), 280-81 (p. 280).

¹³ 'Focal san dealachadh', *CG*, 24 (1842), p. 352.

¹⁴ William Donaldson, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1986), p. 2.

¹⁵ MacLean, wrote under the pen-names 'MacTalla', 'Eóghan Og', 'An Gaidheal anns a' Bhaile', and 'Am Bùirdseach Bànn'. See Eachainn MacDhughail, 'Lachann nam Mogan', *An Gaidheal*, 46 (1951), 31-34, (p. 32). I am informed by Mr Ronald Black that he has heard MacLean referred to in Coll as 'Lachaidh na Gàidhlig'.

MacGregor. Articles with a more scientific slant were contributed by a Glasgow doctor, Dr. R. MacGregor, under the pen-name Rob Ruadh, including two-part articles on small-pox, heat and the laws of nature. Alexander MacGregor's contributions are more wide-ranging than any, incorporating historical tales, natural science, astronomy, information for emigrants and morally uplifting pieces. In its breadth of subject-matter *Cuairtear nan Gleann* had much in common with contemporary English language publications which aimed to instruct and inform readers. *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, established by William and Robert Chambers in 1832, is one with which it might be compared, leaving aside the religious content. The index to *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* is divided into sections covering 'familiar sketches and moral essays, articles of information, biographic sketches, tales original and selected, poetry, columns for particular classes and miscellaneous'.¹⁶ *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, like the Edinburgh journal, was part of a movement to provide 'cheap uplifting reading matter' which would lead to an improvement in the morals of the poorer classes.¹⁷

Fear-Tathaich nam Beann, the last Gaelic journal in this first wave of publications, had an even firmer religious foundation than its predecessors. At the instigation of the General Assembly of the Established Church, a group was set up to consider how the Church addressed the spiritual and secular needs of the people. The outcome was a new monthly journal 'airson eòlas féumail agus taitneach a thoirt do na Gaidheil, mu na nithibh sin mu 'n cudthromaiche dhoibh eòlas fhaghail'.¹⁸ The emphasis on the spiritual, unsurprisingly, was even stronger than in the earlier periodicals, but equally there were articles on a range of topics: other countries, history, science, practical advice on cultivation and news. Like the other Gaelic periodicals of the first half of the nineteenth century, *Fear-Tathaich nam Beann* represented an extension of the pulpit, spiritual concerns superseding the secular. As chapter five discusses, there was what now seems like a clear avoidance of social

¹⁶ *CEJ*, Index to volume 1.

¹⁷ Donaldson, p. 81.

¹⁸ *FT*, 1 (1848), p. 1.

criticism during this period when many Gaels were suffering extremes of social deprivation.

The Gaelic journals in this first half of the nineteenth century, by their conspicuous lack of interest in the physical well-being of those whom they intended should be their readers, reflected quite accurately their times: a sense of sympathy for the predicament of the Gaels, but a general reluctance to do anything to find a long-term solution other than emigration. This feature common to the journals published before 1850 is all the more marked when they are compared with those which appeared after 1870. The change in the nature of Gaelic periodicals after a twenty year hiatus is indicative of a more general transformation in attitude.

An Gaidheal, initially published in Toronto by Nicholson and Company with Angus Nicholson its editor, was conducted principally through Gaelic, but with an English section. Within two months of the journal's first issue being published Nicholson had been appointed Dominion Emigration Agent for the North of Scotland. As a result of this appointment *An Gaidheal* and its editor crossed the Atlantic to continue life in Scotland. Somewhat ironically perhaps, the pro-emigration content was far lower than that of *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, despite the occupation of the editor of *An Gaidheal*. Following in the steps of MacLeod, the magazine informed readers that by providing Gaels with a wide range of reading material in Gaelic it was placing them on an equal footing with Lowlanders who often considered the deficiencies of Gaelic publishing as proof of the barbarity of the Gaels: "Se ar rùn-ne gu 'm biodh an Gaidheal air a chur ann an cor co-ionnan ris a' Ghall anns a' chùis so'.¹⁹ Yet the editorial motivation was somewhat different from that forty years earlier. Nicholson refers to Gaels' duty to their country, to their language and to their ancestors which obliges them to make an effort on behalf of their native language:

A chum agus gu 'n dean sinn seasamh maireann, daingeann, agus éifeachdach an aghaidh nan sruthan tarsuinn so, feumaidh na Gàidheil gu léir *aonadh*, seasamh taobh ri taobh, a dhìon an tìre, an cinnidh, an cànan, agus gach urrainn a bhuineas dhoibh fa leth, nithe mu 'm bheil Gàidheil anns gach àite agus dùthaich aon-sgeulach.²⁰

¹⁹ 'Rùn ar turuis', *An G.*, 4 (1872), 75-76 (p. 75).

²⁰ 'Rùn ar turuis', p. 76.

An Gaidheal was a manifestation of the new sense of self-respect and pride felt by Gaels in the second half of the century. As will be discussed in later chapters, it was a period in which there was an unprecedented interest in the declining language and culture of the Highlands both within and outwith the Highlands and this coincided with a raised expectation on the part of the Gaels in terms of their land rights. *An Gaidheal* emerged in this environment and proceeded to promote this revival of confidence.

One of the most striking aspects of *An Gaidheal* is the number of songs, traditional tales and proverbs which it contained, contributed by some of the foremost collectors of oral literature such as John Francis Campbell. Alongside these are to be found translation of stories by the likes of James Hogg, essays on the history and literature of the Gael, colloquial dialogues, news, allegorical pieces and moral tales. The periodical was a real miscellany. The range of contributors was wide too. Alongside the collectors of folklore were John Whyte (writing under the names Iain MacIllebhain, Mac Mharcuis and Siucram Cam), Donald MacPherson, Sub-Librarian of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh (writing under the pen-name Abrach), Dugald MacPhail (under the name Muileach), P. MacGregor (a Toronto barrister), Donald MacKinnon (later first Professor of Celtic at Edinburgh University) the Rev. Duncan B. Blair, Canada (using his initials D.B.B.) and the Celtic scholar the Reverend Alexander Cameron. The earlier journals were essentially religious publications in Gaelic whereas *An Gaidheal* was a Gaelic publication which included religious articles. Gaelic periodicals of the 1870s and 1880s saw a burgeoning of new writers which diluted the influence of the clergy on the prose writing being published. If the early periodicals were an extension of the pulpit, *An Gaidheal's* affiliations lay closer to the taigh-céilidh. Alexander Carmichael offers the following description of the taigh-ceilidh:

The conversation is general: the local news, the weather, the price of cattle, these leading up to higher themes - the clearing of the glens (a sore subject) the war, the parliament, the effects of the sun upon the earth and the moon upon

the tides . . . [and after tales have been told] if not late, proverbs, riddles, conundrums and songs follow.²¹

Nicholson's periodical was very much a product of its times in that it was not so interested in Gaelic language and culture as a living entity, but as a part of the past. Donald MacKinnon, in one of his contributions to *An Gaidheal*, diagnosed the problem afflicting the periodical when, speaking of the Gaels in more general terms, he wrote, "s e cron ar latha-ne, tha mi meas, gu bheil ar suil a mhain 'n ar deigh. Cha'n 'eil sinn a' sealltainn mu'n cuairt duinn no idir air thoiseach oirn cho tric agus a bu choir dhuinn'.²² The outward show of confidence exhibited by this apparent Gaelic revival of which *An Gaidheal* was part, was arguably a manifestation of a certain lack of confidence, since the focus of this revival was very much on the past, indicating a need to seek reassurance, instead of consciously looking to the present and future. The way in which the Gaels' past was used by MacGregor in his writings, and indeed its role more generally in the Gaelic periodicals, will be considered in a later chapter.

The *Highlander*, on the other hand, looked very much to the future of the Gaels.²³ Edited and published by the fervent pro-crofting campaigner, John Murdoch, after his retirement from his employment as an excise officer, this weekly newspaper was outspoken on behalf of the Gaels and their rights. *For the People's Cause*, edited by James Hunter, draws on Murdoch's diaries and publications to provide a detailed study of his role in the movement for crofting reform.²⁴ The *Highlander* was founded in 1873 on an opposed footing to the *Inverness Courier* which Murdoch believed 'was grossly out of place and used its position to promote a policy which was inimical to the country and to the people'.²⁵ It contained a Gaelic column which reflected the radical stance of the paper in songs, dialogues and letters while also incorporating more traditional material such as tales and proverbs. A number of

²¹ Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1900), p. xxiii.

²² D[onald] MacK[innon], 'Litreachas nan Gaidheal VII Na marbhrannan' *An G.*, 64 (1877), 97-102 (p. 102).

²³ John Murdoch adopted *An t-Ard-albannach* as the *Highlander's* Gaelic title, explaining, 'Roghnaich sinn an t-ainm so, "An t-Ard-Albanach," a chionn gu'm bheil miosachan a' tighinn a mach an Glaschu do'n ainm *An Gaidheal*', *TH*, 16 May 1873, p. 3.

²⁴ James Hunter ed., *For the People's Cause* (Edinburgh, 1986).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

MacGregor's writings for the *Highlander* addressed political issues such as Gaels' land rights and the position of Gaelic in education where his earlier articles and those published in *An Gaidheal* generally avoided any political commentary. Murdoch's publication was, however, beset by financial problems. At one point in his diary Murdoch refers to the 'agonies of impecuniosity' of his newspaper.²⁶ By 1878 the business was being liquidated, but was revived by Murdoch to survive another four years, before it finally succumbed to financial pressures.

One distinctive aspect of the nineteenth century Gaelic periodical press was the way in which it catered for a new type of Gaelic community - an international one. The periodical press emerged in a period of social displacement which saw thousands of Gaels leaving the Highlands to live in Lowland Scotland, North America, Australia and New Zealand. The following excerpt from the introduction to the first edition of *An Teachdaire Gaelach* in 1829 gives some indication of the anticipated geographical distribution of the readership for the emerging Gaelic periodical press in the nineteenth century.

Dealichte mar tha Gaedheil o chéile le monaidhean farsaing, no le caoitibh leathann, cuid diubh ag àiteachadh tìr-mòr na dùthcha, cuid diubh a mach air eileineabh a' chuain, mòran 's na bailtibh margaidh, agus air feadh mhachraichean na'n Gall, 's am barrachd mòr fad o thìr an eolais, fo ghréin loisgich nan Innsean, no fo dhubhar choiltean fàsail America, gidheadh thainig (nar barailne) an t-àm, anns am feud iad comhnaltra taitneach a chumail ri chéile ann an cainnt an dùthcha fein.²⁷

This international dimension is reflected in the contributions as well as in the subscribers. The journals all include a steady stream of contributions from overseas, in addition to publishing information about overseas destinations, which as well as informing prospective emigrants about these countries, would have made those who had stayed in Scotland feel they had some contact with friends and relatives who had emigrated. As regards subscribers, *Cuairtear nan Gleann* lists three agents in Canada involved in selling the journal, indicating that there was some demand for it there at least. *An Gaidheal*, after its removal to Scotland, by 1875 retained thirty-one

²⁶ Ibid., p. 159.

²⁷ 'A luchd duthcha ar cridhe agus ar gaoil', p. 2.

MacGregor's writings for the *Highlander* addressed political issues such as Gaels' land rights and the position of Gaelic in education where his earlier articles and those published in *An Gaidheal* generally avoided any political commentary. Murdoch's publication was, however, beset by financial problems. At one point in his diary Murdoch refers to the 'agonies of impecuniosity' of his newspaper.²⁶ By 1878 the business was being liquidated, but was revived by Murdoch to survive another four years, before it finally succumbed to financial pressures.

One distinctive aspect of the nineteenth century Gaelic periodical press was the way in which it catered for a new type of Gaelic community - an international one. The periodical press emerged in a period of social displacement which saw thousands of Gaels leaving the Highlands to live in Lowland Scotland, North America, Australia and New Zealand. The following excerpt from the introduction to the first edition of *An Teachdaire Gaelach* in 1829 gives some indication of the anticipated geographical distribution of the readership for the emerging Gaelic periodical press in the nineteenth century.

Dealichte mar tha Gaedheil o chéile le monaidhean farsaing, no le caoitibh leathann, cuid diubh ag àiteachadh tìr-mòr na dùthcha, cuid diubh a mach air eileineabh a' chuain, mòran 's na bailtibh margaidh, agus air feadh mhachraichean na'n Gall, 's am barrachd mòr fad o thìr an eolais, fo ghréin loisgich nan Innsean, no fo dhubhar choiltean fàsail America, gidheadh thainig (nar barailne) an t-àm, anns am feud iad comhnaltra taitneach a chumail ri chéile ann an cainnt an dùthcha fein.²⁷

This international dimension is reflected in the contributions as well as in the subscribers. The journals all include a steady stream of contributions from overseas, in addition to publishing information about overseas destinations, which as well as informing prospective emigrants about these countries, would have made those who had stayed in Scotland feel they had some contact with friends and relatives who had emigrated. As regards subscribers, *Cuairtear nan Gleann* lists three agents in Canada involved in selling the journal, indicating that there was some demand for it there at least. *An Gaidheal*, after its removal to Scotland, by 1875 retained thirty-one

²⁶ Ibid., p. 159.

²⁷ 'A luchd duthcha ar cridhe agus ar gaoil', p. 2.

subscribers in Canada.²⁸ These publications were reaching out to an increasingly disparate Gaelic speaking community on an international scale, a fact which in itself may have led to periodicals' short lives as they attempted to please a readership whose common denominator was language, rather than the subject-matter they contained. It is interesting to note that only the *Highlander* and the *Celtic Magazine* were actually published in the Highlands. Even those two were published in Inverness, where Gaelic was becoming less prominent by the later nineteenth century. It should also be noted that a number of Gaelic periodicals were published abroad, most notably *MacTalla* in Canada between 1892 and 1904.

In conclusion, the Gaelic periodicals of the nineteenth century provided opportunities for the development of Gaelic writing and resulted in a number of writers, such as Alexander MacGregor, emerging. The two dominant influences which shaped the periodicals were the pulpit and the ceilidh-house, representing the spiritual and the secular in Gaelic society. The first wave of journals, between 1829 and 1850, was dominated by the former and the second wave, after 1870, by the latter. The following chapters, which discuss the themes of Alexander MacGregor's writings, will consider whether this change in focus of the Gaelic press in the course of the nineteenth century is evident in his work.

²⁸ I. M. M. MacPhail, *The Crofters' War* (Stornoway, 1989), p. 23, footnote 8.

CHAPTER 4

FORM AND STYLE IN MACGREGOR'S WRITING

In preparation for considering the main themes within Alexander MacGregor's prose writings, this chapter will consider aspects of his writing style and of the methods which he chose for the articulation of his subject-matter. Attention will also be given to those influences which helped shape his style. This will provide a framework within which to consider the various subjects on which he wrote, suggesting how style and form varied according to the topic on which he was writing, and to consider the reasons behind his use of different forms. Each subsequent chapter will include some consideration of MacGregor's use of style and form as appropriate to the specific areas under discussion. As a preliminary to this discussion it is important to note the dearth of any comprehensive studies of the style of Gaelic prose writing, from any period. Lachlan MacKinnon's *Prose Writings of Donald MacKinnon* and Thomas M. Murchison's two volumes, *Prose Writings of Donald Lamont* and *Sgrìobhaidhean Choinnich MhicLeòid*, contain some cursory observations on the style of their respective writers and Donald John MacLeod's essay entitled 'Gaelic Prose' offers some generalised comments.¹ This is as far as the study of the style of Gaelic prose writing goes and it is hoped that this thesis will make some small contribution by highlighting some of the more salient aspects of form and style in MacGregor's writing.

Even in the wake of the landmark publication of Carswell's translation of the *Book of Common Order* in 1567 and the translation of the *New Testament*, published in 1767, relatively little Gaelic prose writing appeared in print before the nineteenth century. What did appear consisted largely of translations of religious texts. What Gaelic writers may have lacked in the way of written models in their native language was balanced by the models available to them in English writing, in Gaelic folktales, and if classically trained as many were, in Latin and Greek. A major factor underpinning the emergence of Gaelic writing in the nineteenth century, the significance of which cannot be over emphasised, is that it arose in an essentially oral

¹ Donald John MacLeod, 'Gaelic Prose', *TGSI*, 49 (1974-76), 198-230.

environment. This chapter will consider (1) the manner in which newspapers were used generally in such an oral environment before going on to consider specifically (2) MacGregor's prose dialogues and subsequently (3) the style of his writing in essays.

1 The use of newspapers in an oral environment

The two dominant influences in the formative experience of most Gaels up to, and indeed into, the twentieth century, were oral in nature: the ceilidh house and the pulpit, taking the latter to represent a spectrum of religious experience from the pulpit itself to the communion tent and fellowship meetings which characterised evangelical worship. Both the sacred and the secular depended on verbal rather than written communication, and on maintaining a congregation's or audience's attention. In terms of the development of style in Gaelic prose writing in the nineteenth century, the prominence of the clergy amongst the writers of Gaelic prose in that century is clearly significant. What must therefore be considered in any assessment of the style of Gaelic prose writing is the extent to which these writers deployed their skills in oral communication in their published Gaelic writings. Equally, the fact that they were ministers does not exclude them from the influence of the ceilidh-house, with its rich store of oral tradition, which was as important a medium of education as the school in the nineteenth century.

Before considering MacGregor's writing in some detail it is necessary to highlight an unresearched aspect of the nineteenth century Gaelic periodical press, namely the way in which newspapers and journals were actually used by those who purchased them. This is important as it may have had some bearing on how writers chose to express themselves in print. Accounts exist of ministers in the Highlands reading newspapers, or at least parts of newspapers, from the pulpit. Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus tells of one minister who read a newspaper from the pulpit every Sunday.² The Rev. Murdoch MacDonald, minister of Durness in the eighteenth century, recorded in his diary that he held a meeting after his fellowship meeting, at

² Elizabeth Grant, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady* (Edinburgh, 1898; rev. ed. Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 254-55.

which news was discussed and at which a part of some book was read aloud and then discussed.³ The reading aloud of papers, however, was not restricted to ministers as evidence from rural parts of Scotland outwith the Highlands demonstrates. William Donaldson in *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland* describes a scene strikingly like a ceilidh-house, but with the printed word taking centre stage:

In the country districts likewise, the newspaper became the principal vehicle of the printed word, and in many districts there was a recognised 'reader'. His neighbours would assemble at the house to which the paper was addressed and duly heard it read through; then there would be discussion.⁴

This type of reading seems to have been envisaged by Caraid nan Gaidheal. In one of his dialogues he has one character report a scene which he had witnessed in Tìree: 'Mar bha mi 'gabhail a-staigh do Sgairinnis bha buidheanas dhaoine an-sin 'nan suidhe air a' chreig ag éisdeachd ri Calum Tàilleir 'ga leughadh', the object of their attention here being *Cuairtear nan Gleann*.⁵ In another dialogue Fionnladh Piobaire tells his wife, 'So! so! a Mhàiri, las an crùisgein agus cluinneamaid na th' aig an Teachdaire Ghàidhealach r'a ràdh air a' chuairt so'.⁶

An account from *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* in 1844 reports of newspapers being read aloud at the time of the Reform Bill in the workplace while work continued.⁷ This use of the printed word has also been demonstrated by David Vincent in *Literacy and Popular Culture*. With reference to the rise of radical journalism in nineteenth century England he has observed that writers adopted 'a self-consciously personal tone' as a means of bridging the gap between the oral and the literate means of forming political opinion, and that there was a greater likelihood of them being read aloud than silently.⁸ It is highly likely, therefore, that similar practices were common in the Highlands, easing the transition from the spoken to the printed word, and that writers would be aware of this. Indeed, MacGregor himself

³ Hew Morrison, 'Notices of the ministers of the Presbytery of Tongue from 1726 to 1763: from the diary of the Rev. Murdoch Macdonald of Durness', *TGSI*, 11 (1885), 293-310 (p. 297).

⁴ William Donaldson, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1986), p. 20.

⁵ 'Comhradh eadar Cuairtear nan Gleann agus Eachann Tirisdeach', in *Caraid nan Gaidheal*, ed. by A. Clerk, (Edinburgh, 1899), pp. 147-51 (148).

⁶ 'Comhradh nan Cnoc. Fionnladh Piobaire agus a Bhean, am Brocaire, agus am Maighstir-Sgoile', in *Caraid nan Gaidheal*, pp. 40-51 (40).

⁷ *CEJ*, 19 October 1844, p. 249.

⁸ David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 243.

was, to all intents and purposes, promoting the communal side of the printed word when he encouraged Gaels, in the interests of making Gaelic periodicals affordable, to purchase them communally. 'Rachadh iad nam buidhneibh anns gach sgìreachd, agus rachadh seisear anns gach buidheann airson a' Chuairteir, agus cha ruig an cosdas ach sgillinn Shasunnach air gach fear sa' bhliadhna no sgillinn ruadh sa' mhìos'.⁹ The case for printed works being read aloud is certainly strong, and is strengthened by the high levels of non-literacy in the Highlands for much of the nineteenth century.

Writers may well have been consciously influenced by the potential oral use of printed Gaelic as means of bridging the gap between the oral and the written, in the same way as the radical writers in England when they consciously adopted a personal tone as well as the pace and rhythms of everyday speech.¹⁰ This adoption of a personal tone is perhaps most apparent in Gaelic writing in the prose dialogue which this chapter will consider first, before considering the style of MacGregor's other writings.

2 The prose dialogue

David Vincent refers to the way in which the upsurge of printing and literacy depersonalised authority. In an oral tradition information and literature were transmitted at a personal level and 'were validated by individual members of the older generation'.¹¹ MacGregor, as a writer, seems to have been aware of this need to validate his writing in some way for his readers, as can be seen, for example, in 'An Cìs-Sheachnaiche'. He begins with the words, 'Bheir sinn an cùntas seachad ann am briathraibh ministear àraidh a bha 'na shùil-fhianuis air mar a thachair'.¹² In the style of the traditional sgeulaiche he alludes to his source in the very first sentence as a means of proving the veracity of his tale. It is this need to personalise the impersonal printed word which may have led to the popularity of the dialogue amongst nineteenth century Gaelic writers. It is with Caraid nan Gaidheal that the Gaelic

⁹ Clàr 20, p. 120.

¹⁰ Vincent, p. 243.

¹¹ Vincent, p. 171.

¹² Clàr 6, p. 169.

dialogue is commonly associated. Yet it was MacGregor who was, without doubt, the foremost exponent of the prose dialogue in Gaelic. Between 1871 and his death in 1881 at least sixty-four of his dialogues appeared in print. The dialogue, however, was not a form new to Gaelic literature in the nineteenth century and so this section will first survey in brief the tradition of the dialogue in Gaelic Scotland and Ireland.

Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, in *Early Medieval Ireland*, discusses a seventh century manuscript, *Hisperica Famina*, which parodies the conventional use of the dialogue as a method of teaching. O Cróinín refers to 'the question-and-answer or colloquy technique much used by the early Irish schools', a technique he claims was derived from bilingual phrase books designed to teach Latin vocabulary.¹³ This attests to the early origins of the dialogue in Ireland. Similarly, early law texts make use of this question-answer format. A perhaps more familiar example is 'Agallamh na Senórach' (the Colloquy of the Ancients) which involves a dialogue between St. Patrick and Oisín and Caoilte, two of the surviving members of the *fianna*. This early dialogue is particularly interesting in terms of later use of the genre as the Rev. Donald MacLeod of Glenelg, writing in 1764, refers to the fact that 'Highlanders at their festivals and other public meetings, acted the poems of Ossian'.¹⁴ Douglas Hyde comments that he once read a letter in an Irish-American newspaper by a man who claimed to have seen the Agallamh acted out.¹⁵ Other examples of early dialogue poems are not hard to find, such as 'Immacallam in dá Thuarad' (the Colloquy of the Two Sages), with two of its manuscript copies belonging to the twelfth century.¹⁶ Another consists of a fourteenth century version of a dialogue between Dallán Forgaill, Colam Cille and Baíthín at the Convention of Druim Cett, in which the saint shows himself to favour generosity to poets whilst Baíthín argues for the church and prayer.¹⁷ The genre was thus an accepted part of the literary tradition which Ireland and Gaelic Scotland shared.¹⁸

¹³ Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland 400-1200* (New York, 1995), p. 179.

¹⁴ *Highland Society of Scotland's Report on Ossian* (Edinburgh, 1805), p. 29.

¹⁵ Douglas Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland* (London, 1967), p. 511 fn.1.

¹⁶ Whitley Stokes, 'The Colloquy of the Two Sages', *Revue Celtique*, 26 (1905), 4-64.

¹⁷ Brian Ó Cuív, 'A Colam Cille Dialogue', *Eigse*, 12 (1967-78), 165-72.

¹⁸ For a brief discussion of this genre in Celtic literature and references to other studies see Thomas Owen Clancy, 'Saint and Fool: the image and function of Cummine Fota and Comgán Mac Da Chérda in early Irish literature' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 180-86.

Although the classical Gaelic poets do not seem to have favoured the dialogue form, the genre emerged within Gaelic Scotland in the works of the vernacular poets who came to prominence in the course of the seventeenth century as the classical tradition was eclipsed. In fact, it is almost as though a dialogue poem was a standard part of any poet's repertoire. Virtually every well known poet of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has at least one dialogue extant in his or her work, and some, such as Rob Donn have a number. The following represent a mere sample: Sileas na Ceapaich composed *Comhradh ris a' Bhàs*;¹⁹ An Clarsair Dall's *Oran do Mhac Leòid Dhùn Bheagain* consists of Echo lamenting the passing of the traditional role of the chief and the Harper condemning the conduct of the new chief;²⁰ Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair composed *Oran Araid mar gum b'ann eadar am Prionnsa agus na Gaeil* in which the Prince raises the morale of the dispirited Gaels in the wake of Culloden;²¹ John MacCodrum's *Caraid agus Nàmhaid an Uisge-beatha* argues the merits and evils of whisky consumption, the final word resting with the Enemy of whisky;²² Ailean Dall's *Gearan na Mnatha an aghaidh a fir agus iad a' freagairt a chéile*, in which contention is again centre-stage.²³ In each case there are two sides to be given whether in debate or in agreement on the same topic. Waulking songs could also take the form of a dialogue, the commonest type being either that of flyting or of a conversation between a man and a woman.²⁴ Examples from J. L. Campbell's *Hebridean Folksongs* include '*S muladach mi 's mi air m'aineol* and *Cha dìrich mi an t-uchd le fonn* while Margaret Fay Shaw's *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist* contains *Còmhradh eadar Nighean Og agus Each-Uisge* and *A' Bhean Iadach*.²⁵ This list of poems and songs is far from exhaustive, but serves to demonstrate that the dialogue poem was an accepted part of

¹⁹ Colm Ó Baoill ed., *Bàrdachd Shìlis na Ceapaich* (Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 12-14.

²⁰ W. Matheson ed., *The Blind Harper: An Clarsair Dall* (Edinburgh, 1970), pp. 58-72.

²¹ J. L. Campbell ed., *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh, 1984), pp. 86-92.

²² W. Matheson ed., *The Songs of John MacCodrum* (Edinburgh, 1938), pp. 308-10.

²³ J. MacKenzie, *Sar-Obair nam Bàrd Gaelach, or the Beauties of Gaelic Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1841), pp. 308-10.

²⁴ J. L. Campbell, *Hebridean Folksongs* (Oxford, 1969), p. 20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-14 and pp. 114-16; Margaret Fay Shaw, *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist* (Aberdeen, 1986), p. 171 and pp. 254-55.



Gaelic literature and therefore would be known to Norman MacLeod and Alexander MacGregor.

Remaining with the Gaelic roots of the prose dialogue, Antoinette Butler in her unpublished study of Scottish Gaelic drama before 1945 has highlighted the literature of the Reformed Church as a factor underlying the attraction of the dialogue for Gaelic prose writers.²⁶ John Carswell's translation of the Book of Common Order contained 'Modh Ceasnuighe na n-Oganach' based on Calvin's Catechism. The Catechism is in itself a dialogue, based on question and answer as a means of religious instruction:

- M. An t-Athair, an Mac, agus an Sbiorad Naomh, an é go bfuilid acht ina n-aon-Dia amháin?
D. Ní fhuilid gan amharus acht ina n-a /on-Dia, gé táid edir-dhealaidhthe a dtrí pearsandaibh.²⁷

It is interesting to note the example of William MacKenzie (An Ceistear Crùbach), a late seventeenth / early eighteenth century catechist from Gairloch. On not being invited to a local wedding he composed a satirical song in dialogue form, *Oran eadar càraid òg oidhche 'm bainnse*. As a direct consequence of this composition he was relieved of his catechising duties by the Presbytery.²⁸

Another religious text which was prominent in the Highlands during the nineteenth century was John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the first Gaelic translation of this (*Cuairt an Oilthirich; no Turas a' Chrìosduidh*) appearing in 1812, with at least a further fourteen editions following.²⁹ A series of dialogues are fundamental to the text as Christian encounters such characters as Worldly-Wiseman, Piety and Faithful in his quest for the Celestial City. The Gaelic translation of this text was one of the commonest books to be found in Highland households after the Bible itself. Again dialogue is used as a means of instruction. Writers of Gaelic prose

²⁶ Antoinette Butler, 'An Outline of Scottish Gaelic Drama before 1945' (unpublished MLitt. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1994), pp. 42-43.

²⁷ R. L. Thomson ed., *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh* (Edinburgh, 1970), p. 95.

²⁸ MacKenzie, p. 364-65.

²⁹ Mary Ferguson and Ann Matheson, *Scottish Gaelic Union Catalogue* (Edinburgh, 1984), pp. 27-28.

in the nineteenth century, particularly those from amongst the clergy, would have been aware of a range of dialogues in verse and prose in their language.

Contemporary examples of the dialogue also existed outwith Gaelic literature - models which may have been equally influential upon these Gaelic writers. 1822 witnessed the first in a popular and long-lived series of dialogues to be published in the well known monthly periodical *Blackwood's Magazine*. The dialogues, entitled *Noctes Ambrosianae*, were at first a work on which a number of people collaborated, but by 1825 were the work of one man - John Wilson, Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, writing under the pen-name Christopher North.³⁰ Wilson and Norman MacLeod were contemporaries at Glasgow University, where it has been written of MacLeod that 'the glory of his college days was that in physical contests he alone could rival John Wilson'.³¹ Wilson's *Noctes* and MacLeod's *Comhraidhean* both appeared in the same decade, Wilson's some four years before those of the Gaelic writer. Of Wilson's conversations it has been said that 'it was the light and rapid survey in racy dialogue of public events, books and people, by an easy tribunal that delighted most in the ludicrous side of life'.³² *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, first published in 1832, also published prose dialogues, although with less frequency. These were in fact closer in form to the Gaelic dialogues than *Noctes Ambrosianae*, with the emphasis on conveying information and instruction rather than on entertainment. Some, translated from French, were specifically aimed at young people, such as the conversation between Monsieur de Flanmont and his children concerning virtue and generosity.³³ A series of dialogues entitled 'Fireside Chit-chat' was published during 1846, discussing topical issues. The introduction to one states, 'They talk of the fine arts - popular amusements and indulgences - pawnbrokers - usury - gambling - and railway directors; on all which subjects Gilaroo announces some very extraordinary doctrines'.³⁴ The homely title is similar

³⁰ Elsie Swann, *Christopher North (John Wilson)* (Edinburgh, 1934), pp. 111-12.

³¹ J. Wellwood, *Norman MacLeod* (Edinburgh, 1897), p. 15.

³² Swann, p. 111.

³³ 'Column for Young People', *CEJ*, 3 January 1846.

³⁴ 'Fireside Chit-chat V' *CEJ*, 21 March 1846.

to those used by Caraid nan Gaidheal - 'Comhradh nan Cnoc', 'Comhradh na Ceardaich' and 'Comhradh Feasgair 'an Tigh a' Mhaoir'.

Caraid nan Gaidheal is credited with introducing a more colloquial style to Gaelic writing through his dialogues. In them familiar Highland characters such as the schoolmaster, the smith, the piper and others converse on a range of issues from the Reform Bill and social change, to volcanoes and polar expeditions. The characters, in common with traditional tales, are stereotypical, and their function is similar to that performed by the Catechism: information is elucidated by means of question and answer, with one character, often the catechist or the schoolmaster, representing the voice of authority. Generally it is this figure who dominates in the delivery of information. The following excerpt of conversation between Lachann nan Ceist and Eoghan Brocair bears a striking resemblance to the style of the Catechism:

Eogh. - Cò e am fleasgach ùr so, agus cò as a tha esan a' teachd oirnn?

Lach. - A Glascho.

Eogh. - Ciod e nach tig á Glascho! Ach innis so dhomh: Ciod an teachdaireachd air am bheil an Gille-ruith ùr so a' teachd?

Lach. - A thoirt eòlais do na Gàidheil, agus a dhùsgadh déidh agus tograidh anna gu leughadh.³⁵

The dialogue in the hands of ministers such as MacLeod and MacGregor represented a continuity in the use of the dialogue as a didactic tool. Of MacLeod's *Comhraidhean*, Professor John Stuart Blackie, Professor of Greek at Edinburgh University, wrote in 1876, 'the most brilliant papers are written in a dialogic form, marked by the dramatic grace of Plato and the shrewd humour of Lucian'.³⁶ If comparison is to be made with Classical writers, MacLeod's dialogues seem to have more in common with the dialogues of Cicero than with the philosophical conversations of Plato and the lighter dialogues of Lucian. Elizabeth Merrill in *The Dialogue in English Literature* comments that in Cicero's work the dialogue exists primarily as a means of exposition of subject-matter.³⁷ She expands on the expository dialogue as opposed to the philosophical dialogue, explaining, 'It is that the ultimate

³⁵ *Caraid nan Gaidheal*, p. 8. Compare 'Gille-ruith' (Dwelly - courier; runner; postman) with the 'Gilaroo' from *CEJ* on the previous page. English would seem to have borrowed this from Gaelic.

³⁶ J. S. Blackie, *The Language and Literature of the Scottish Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1876), p. 315.

³⁷ Elizabeth Merrill, *The Dialogue in English Literature* (New York, 1911), p. 9.

aim and object of the expository dialogue is not to elicit truth through argument, but rather to set forth facts or principles or theories already existent in the mind of the writer'.³⁸ This is essentially what MacLeod was doing with his dialogues. Characterisation was relatively unimportant beyond the creation of a range of stereotypes to whom Gaels would be able to relate. Instead, the dialogue was a tool for the provision of the advice and information which MacLeod, as a member of the Establishment, wanted the Gaels to receive. In a conversation between Am Brocair and Am Maighstir-Sgoile, the badger hunter expresses his dislike of gaugers causing the schoolmaster to expound upon the necessity of obeying the law - 'Cha-n'eil iad gràineil ach leo-san a tha 'bristeadh reachd na rìoghachd . . .'.³⁹ In 'Comhradh eadar Cuairtear nan Gleann agus Eachann Tirisdeach', Eachann asks An Cuairtear to tell him the truth about New Zealand, which An Cuairtear proceeds to do in glowing terms.⁴⁰ Instead of merely using an essay to convey factual information MacLeod injected a personal and dramatic quality into the impersonal printed word, perhaps easing the transition from an oral to an increasingly literate culture. A published account of the first dinner held by the Ossianic Society of Glasgow University in 1833, at which MacLeod himself was in the Chair, records 'that the recital of a dialogue from the Gaelic Messenger in character, by Mr Maclaren from America and Mr MacDougall from Perthshire, occasioned great merriment'.⁴¹ This begs the question, which this chapter does not seek to answer, as to how frequently written dialogues were 'performed' in this manner.

Alexander MacGregor did not publish any dialogues in his early period of writing. All his dialogues appeared in print in the space of ten years. Although clearly influenced by MacLeod, MacGregor takes the dialogue further, as will emerge in later chapters, particularly in the chapter on social criticism, as the dialogue becomes a means of criticising landlords' conduct rather than defending the Establishment. In common with MacLeod, exposition is one aspect of his *comhraidhean*. In contrast, however, the Establishment figure appears with less

³⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

³⁹ *Caraid nan Gaidheal*, p. 44.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 136-47.

⁴¹ *Glasgow Herald*, 18 January 1833.

frequency in his dialogues. Certainly some of MacGregor's works involve the schoolmaster, but more commonly a representative of authority is missing. Murachadh Bàn and Coinneach Cìobair are the regular characters in MacGregor's works, and in this case it is appropriate to use the word 'character' as there is a higher degree of characterisation than is to be found in MacLeod's dialogues. This is due to continuity. Murachadh and Coinneach became regulars in the pages of *An Gaidheal* - in fact MacGregor's only characters in that periodical - and after its demise in 1878 they began to appear in the *Highlander*, replacing the schoolmaster of his previous dialogues which had appeared in the paper. This prolonged acquaintance with the pair would have allowed readers to regard them almost as old friends. They even put in an appearance at meetings of the Gaelic Society of Inverness. Unlike MacLeod's dialogues which lacked this degree of continuity, MacGregor was able to mould his characters over a period of years. Readers would have come to know that Coinneach was the more superstitious of the two whereas Murachadh was more worldly-wise. Both characters learn from one another. The readers' familiarity with the characters allowed MacGregor to add an extra note of levity in places. Murachadh makes fun of his friend for his superstitious beliefs as in the following example when he comments that he has not seen Coinneach for a while - 'Bha eagal orm gu 'n d'fhalbh do chàirdean, na sìthichean leat'.⁴² Elsewhere, Coinneach observes of Murachadh, 'Gu dearbh bu dàn a' ghruagach, no, an t-sithich a thigeadh 'n ad char-sa, aig a bheil fuath co mòr d' an taobh'.⁴³ MacGregor even pokes fun at himself when Coinneach refers to 'an seann Sgiathanach, aig am bheil a reir mo bheachd-sa, seillean 'n a cheann'.⁴⁴

Humour is an important aspect of MacGregor's style, allowing him to lighten the mood at times. Take, for example, the following banter between Callum a' Ghlinne and the schoolmaster in which the latter ridicules Callum's new beard, saying, 'Carson a cheadaich Ealasaid dhuit Gorilla a dheanamh dhiot fein air an dòigh sin oir bu cheart cho maith dhi codal a dheanamh ri taobh graineig is rid' thaobh-sa, Fhir mo chridhe'.⁴⁵ In the dialogue it emerges that it is nine months since Callum and

⁴² Clàr 93, p. 102.

⁴³ Clàr 95, p. 210.

⁴⁴ Clàr 68, p. 235.

⁴⁵ Clàr 148, p. 3.

the schoolmaster met when Callum registered the birth of his child. The schoolmaster enquires if he is there for the same reason on this occasion. This time it is Callum who is the witty one: 'Paisd eile! cha 'n 'eil ach eigin naoi miosan o 'n bha mi 'deanamh a ghnòthuich sin maille riut roimhe, ach feudaiddh e bhi gu 'm bheil seol ur agaibh air na cuisean sin air am bheil sinn fhathast aineolach anns a' ghleann'.⁴⁶ The humour is homely, and this last example exploits contemporary perceptions outwith the Highlands of the Gaels as backward. Thus MacGregor succeeds in using the dialogue format for entertainment as well as for information.

A further aspect of dialogues which may have appealed to the writers was the fact that they lent themselves to creating a sense of intimacy. MacGregor frequently begins a dialogue with Murachadh or Coinneach welcoming the other into his home, effectively welcoming the reader also into the intimacy of the fireside - 'Dean suidhe a steach ris a' ghealbhan; socraich, agus gar thu fein, gus am faighear boinne beag a bhlàthaicheas thu an déigh do thurais agus do sgithis'.⁴⁷ Similarly when Coinneach opens his door to a somewhat wet Murachadh he calls to his wife, 'A' Sheonaid, grad chuir teine 's an t-seomar, gus an ruisg do Ghoistidh e fein dh' ionnsuidh a' chraicinn, agus faigh badan tiorma dha le cabhaig'.⁴⁸

The dialogue offered something new in terms of style and subject matter compared with the religious texts which formed the bulk of Gaelic publications into the nineteenth century. Caraid nan Gaidheal in one of his dialogues suggests that the average Gaelic reader found the style of published religious texts somewhat unwieldy when one character comments, 'Tha 'Ghàelic tuilleadh a's domhain air mo shon, agus na smaointean air an leigeadh ris air uairibh air dhòigh nach 'eil mi 'g an tuigsinn'.⁴⁹ The language used by MacLeod and MacGregor in their dialogues tends to be more colloquial than that of religious works and this may have facilitated their acceptance by Gaelic readers, or at least that seems to have been the writers' intentions. MacGregor certainly avoided the highly formal language of the Bible in favour of a style closer to that of everyday speech. He did not necessarily choose the most

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Clàr 94, p. 176.

⁴⁸ Clàr 121, p. 161.

⁴⁹ *Caraid nan Gaidheal*, p. 11.

succinct means of expression as in the following amusing example when he indicates the speaker's intention of going to bed - 'ach tha 'n t-am againn a nis a bhi cur ar cuid cheann far am faigh sinn 's a' mhadainn iad.'⁵⁰ As will be discussed in a later chapter, he also made frequent use of proverbs in his dialogues. In addition to the teaching which the proverbs provided, they characterised the dialogues as being genuinely Gaelic. Generally MacGregor's use of proverbs is not contrived, rather they are used to demonstrate or support some point as when Coinneach says of Sir Seumas who is effecting changes on his land, 'Is fhad o'n chuala sinn gu 'n "teagaisg cleachd agus fein-fhiosrachadh na h-amadain", agus theagaisg iad gu dileas Sir Seumas, ge b'e co d' an aidicheadh se e.'⁵¹ On another occasion Murachadh asks Coinneach what had caused him to go to Ireland and he receives the reply, 'A cheart ni a chuir an earb air an loch, an eiginn, a Mhurachaidh; is iomadh ni a bheir an eiginn gu crich'.⁵²

Regardless of whether these dialogues were actually read aloud, they were inherently oral in nature, attempting to recreate everyday social intercourse in print as a means of entertaining and disseminating information. MacGregor and other exponents of the Gaelic dialogue were in effect trying to bridge the gap between the oral and the written. However, the whole area of the dialogue in Gaelic literature, whether in prose or poem, is a field which merits a thesis in itself. Having considered the qualities of the dialogue which resulted in its becoming a favourite mode of expression for Alexander MacGregor, this next section will consider the oral qualities of his essays.

3 Style in MacGregor's essays

A minister, as a practitioner of oral discourse, was well positioned to adopt a style of writing which would lend itself to being read aloud. Alexander MacGregor's writings certainly exhibit some characteristics of oration. In general terms, the purposes of his essays fall into the categories of (a) moral and self-improvement and (b) educating through the provision of useful information. The language of these

⁵⁰ Clàr 69, p. 262.

⁵¹ Clàr 78, p. 114.

⁵² Clàr 76, p. 14.

tends to be less colloquial and more formal than that of the dialogue, although it is not unusual to find Gaelic proverbs and Biblical quotations in the same text. The more formal texts show greater influence by Biblical Gaelic in terms of lexis with words such as 'labhair', 'cosmhuil ri', 'fagus', 'ag imeachd', 'araon' and 'uime sin' appearing frequently. The outstanding feature of MacGregor's prose as a whole, however, is the clarity of his language. This clarity stems from his awareness of his audience and of the need to use idiom and vocabulary with which they would be familiar.

It might therefore be expected that the influence of sermons would be discernible in the style of MacGregor's prose. As Donald Meek has pointed out in the *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* relatively few original Gaelic sermons were published in the nineteenth century, the emphasis being on the spoken word rather than on the printed.⁵³ Indeed, emphasis placed on the spontaneity of oral delivery is evidenced in the disdain of the phrase 'ministearan pàipeir', referring to those members of the clergy who read their sermons. Some of the more common features of the sermon, whether in Gaelic or in English, are the use of imperatives, frequent use of the second person and the repetition of structures in order to involve an audience and to reinforce the message. One publication by a contemporary of MacGregor demonstrates some of these features. In 1832 the Rev. Dr John MacDonald of Ferintosh published a sermon which he had delivered at the time of an outbreak of cholera in Dingwall. MacDonald, otherwise known as the 'Apostle of the North', or in Gaelic, Dòmhnallach Mòr na Tòisidheachd, was a highly renowned evangelical preacher.⁵⁴ It is worth bearing in mind that this particular sermon was delivered orally before it was published, and so the published form may vary substantially from that preached if MacDonald, as seems likely given the esteem in which he was held as a preacher, delivered his sermon without the aid of the written word. The importance of the spoken word is affirmed by MacDonald in his own preface to the sermon in which he 'confesses that he would, at any time, rather use his

⁵³ *DSCHT*, pp. 348 and 671.

⁵⁴ *DSCHT*, p. 511.

tongue than his *pen*'.⁵⁵ The following excerpt shows him questioning his listeners and readers and addressing them in the second person singular, adding that personal form of address, rather than distancing his audience with the more distant plural:

Tha thu ag earbsadh às an Tighearna, agus air an aobhar sin cha chleachd thu meadhonan. Ciod a shaoileadh tu do'n duine a thuiteadh san uisge, agus nach deanamh dìchioll gu faighinn gu tìr, ach a luigheadh gu sàmhach socarach an sud . . . Nach abradh tu g'an robh an duine sin às a chiall; gur ann a bha e a' fanoid air Dia, agus g'am bu cheart g'am bàsaicheadh e an sud? Am bheil thu tuigsinn gur tusa fein an duine?⁵⁶

Another example demonstrates forceful use of repetition:

Agus is plaigh *chràiteach* i. Is cràiteach a bhi a' coimhead na muinntir a tha fulang fuidhe . . . Is cràiteach mar an ceudna nach urrainn neach dol fagus doibh, no am frithealadh a dh'fheumadh iad, a dheanamh dhoibh, gun e fein a chuir an cunnart. Is cràiteach g'am biodh teicheadh aig na h-uilbh o'n mhuinntir theinn . . . Agus is cràiteach, an uair a rinn an trioblaid a gnìomh fein . . .⁵⁷

These stylistic features are evident also in the Gaelic sermons of Reverend Ewen MacDiarmid whose collection of sermons was published in 1804, for example, 'a' chlann nan daoine tuigibh o so, nadur a pheacaidh, tuigibh o so ceartas Dhè; tuigibh o so gràdh ar Slànuighear, tuigibh o so luachmhoireachd ar n-anama'.⁵⁸ Here the more usual second person plural imperative is used. These oratorical characteristics of the sermon are to be found through much of MacGregor's writing, but perhaps with highest frequency in his essays on astronomy and on the natural world, that is when he is conveying factual information to his readers. The following excerpt is from 'An Seangan':

Am bheil sinn mi-thaingeil? Ma tha - rachamaid chum an daimh agus an asail, oir tha Dia ag ràdh, 'Is aithne do 'n damh a shealbhadair agus do 'n asail prasach a mhaighstir; ach cha 'n aithne do Israel; cha'n 'eil mo shluagh a' toirt fa 'near'. (Is. i. 3.) A rìs, am bheil sinn mi-chùramach ma thimchioll oibre freasdail Dé, agus a' dichuimhneachadh nan amanna a's freagarraiche chum ar dleas'nais a cho'-lìonadh? Ma tha - rachamaid dh' ionnsuidh eunlaith nan spèur; oir tha Dia ag ràdh, . . . A rìs; am bheil sinn làn cùram agus iomaguin, agus a'

⁵⁵ Eoin Domhnallach, *Searmoin* a thugadh seachad an InerPheafaran aig an am an do bhris an galar d'an goirear an colera mach 'sa bhaile. (Inverness, 1832) Preface. See also J. Kennedy, *The Apostle of the North* (Inverness, 1886).

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

⁵⁸ Eobhann MacDiarmid, *Searmona* (Edinburgh, 1804), p. 40.

suidheachadh ar cridhe gu tur air ciod a chuireas sinn umainn? Ma tha - fòghlumaid gliocas o'n fhitheach; oir tha Criosd ag ràdh . . . A ris; am bheil sinn leasg, lunndach, agus dìomhanach? Ma tha - tha Dia le béul an duine ghlice 'gar cur dh' ionnsuidh an t-seangain . . .'⁵⁹

The structure in this striking piece of writing is highly repetitive and aims to reinforce what has been said. This is a common feature of sermons, and indeed of oral delivery generally, since the repetition facilitates comprehension for the listener. The listener / reader is drawn effectively into the subject by the use of imperatives and MacGregor chooses to use the first rather than second person plural imperative, creating an immediate bond between writer and reader. Strings of imperatives are a common feature of MacGregor's didactic essays as in the following example:

A ris, faicibh an cinne-daoine; thugaibh fa'near beathaichean na machrach, èunlaith nan spéur, biasda snaigeach na talmhainn, agus iasga na mara; agus smuainichibh air an àireamh do-thuigsinn aca agus féumaidh sibh aideachadh nach 'eil e 'n comas duibh ruigheachd ach air an earrainn a's lugha do na beò-chréutairibh sin a dhealbhadh leis-san a's Ughdar do na h-uile nithibh!⁶⁰

Once more there is a high level of listener / reader involvement, as a result of the direct speech of the first and second person, and by questions - 'an uair a bheachdaicheas sinn gu cùramach air cruinn-chorpaibh soillseach nan speur . . . an uair a dh'fhosglas sinn ar sùilean . . .',⁶¹ 'ciod e cumhachd crìochnuichte an duine? Ciod e cumhachd nan aingeal a's àirde ann an glòir . . .'.⁶² These stylistic devices are all those which a preacher would use to engage the attention of his audience in his sermon and to ensure clarity of communication.

Another feature of MacGregor's essay is his use of pairs of words. This is a particular characteristic of his use of nouns and adjectives which are either synonyms or fairly close in meaning. In 'Air Cruinn-chorpaibh nan Speur' for instance he writes

Mar so chithear a' ghrian, àillidh agus òirdhearc ann am meadhon a teaghlaich, a' co-phàirteachadh riu gach sòlais agus aoibhneis . . . Air do'n ghréin a bhi ni's àillidh' agus ni's dealraiche na uile sholuis eile nèimh.⁶³

⁵⁹ Clàr 23, p. 328.

⁶⁰ Clàr 16, p. 285.

⁶¹ Clàr 8(b), p. 226.

⁶² Clàr 58, p. 45.

⁶³ Clàr 10 (b), p. 252.

Here there are three pairs - àillidh agus òirdhearc; sòlais agus aoibhneis; ni's aillidh' agus ni's dealraiche - each amplifying the other, the repetition again a feature of oral discourse. In 'Earail do Mhuinntir na Gaidhealtachd mu'n Ghaidheal' MacGregor writes of the Gaels, 'bha iad gu minic an airc 's an eiginn, - an gainne 's am bochduinn, ach nochdadh truantas leis na miltibh d'an taobh-san, do bhrìgh gu 'n robh iad riamh ainmeil agus measail'.⁶⁴ In an earlier piece contributed to *Fear-Tathaich nam Beann* on emigration to Prince Edward Island MacGregor relates 'cha 'n 'eil na Frangaich so idir deanadach, no dìchiollach, oir is sluagh mi-chùramach agus neo-shuimeil iad'.⁶⁵ Similarly, in 'Mu thimchioll Imirich nan Gàidheal do dh-America' he says of the necessity of emigration 'tha so gu cinnteach tròm agus trioblaideach' and he observes of the Gaels' destination 'far, trid dìchill agus saothreach am bi iad a chaoidh a' sealbhachadh sìth agus pailteis, gun eagal orra aon chuid roimh ghuth a' mhaoir, no gaoir na bàrdainn!'⁶⁶ Other examples include 'ann an cànan bhinn agus mhillis na dùcha',⁶⁷ 'iomadach curaidh calma agus gaisgeach cruadalach',⁶⁸ 'toirt rabhaidh agus earail',⁶⁹ 'gach blàr deistinneach agus cath fuilteach'⁷⁰ and 'na tonnan atmhor agus ànradhach'.⁷¹ These are but a few examples from MacGregor's writings. The effect is one of emphasis and the fact that some of the pairs alliterate adds to the aural quality. This pairing of words is a stylistic feature of folktales, suggesting the influence of oral literature in shaping MacGregor's written prose. The following example is from the tale 'Conall', published by John Francis Campbell in 1860, with the pairs of words highlighted in bold

Thug e sgoil **mhic rìgh agus rìdire** dha, agus nur a bha e buidheach **sgoil agus ionnsachadh** thug e dhachaidh e do'n phàileas, Urs' an rìgh, 'Chuir mi seachad a' bhliadhna so go math. Tha ceann na bliadhna nis a' tighinn 's tha **trioblaid agus cùram** a' tigh 'n orm leatha'. . . Cha ruig thu leas cùram a bhi ort 'tha e air eubhach a mach gor mis' an t-oighr' òg 's air a chur sìos **ann am paipeirean 's an litrichean** anns gach ceàrn de 'n rioghachd. . . An e sin smaointinn a th'agad a mhic mo pheathar,' ars' an Rìgh, 'cha robh **ceart na còir** agad air an

⁶⁴ Clàr 92, p. 49

⁶⁵ Clàr 28, p. 178.

⁶⁶ Clàr 5, p. 146.

⁶⁷ Clàr 20, p. 116.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Clàr, p. 50.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 49.

⁷¹ Clàr 39 (b), p. 355.

rioghachd fhaotainn . . . 'Bidh **latha blàir agus batailt** ann ma 'n lig mise sin air aghaidh,' urs' am fear òg.⁷²

This technique is also a distinctive feature of John Carswell's style, and has been observed as being a feature of sixteenth century English as well as of Middle Irish prose texts.⁷³ Although MacGregor did not make as frequent use of this pairing of words as Carswell, it is nonetheless a distinctive feature of his writing which is indicative of some consciousness of aural as well as written quality.

David Vincent has remarked on the fact that the printed word allows for a higher degree of abstraction than the spoken word and that in a period of increasing literacy 'those who mastered the new technology of communication faced a constant struggle to establish a working relationship between book learning and day-to-day experience'.⁷⁴ The evidence from Alexander MacGregor's writings suggests that he was highly aware of this disparity between the oral and the literary. Some of his subject-matter, particularly that relating to science, had a natural tendency to be abstract. MacGregor makes a concerted effort to make the abstract concrete for his readers and attempts to place his subject within the realms of their experience. In his series of essays on astronomy he provides a visual demonstration of the immense size of the universe to his readers when he takes a flat field or frozen loch as his analogy for the universe:

Faigheadh e achadh còmhnaidh, na loch uisge reothadh trì mìle gach rathad. Cuireadh e peileir mòr, a bhios seachd troidhean mu'n cuairt ann am meadhon a' chomhnaidh sin, air son na Gréine. A ris, gabhadh e sreang leth ceud slat ann am fad, agus deanadh e cuairt mu'n pheileir mhòr a shuidhich e air son na Gréine; cuireadh e grainne de shìol mustaird air a chuairt sin, agus nochdaidh sin Mercuri. Gabhadh e sreang eile deich agus ceithir fichead slat ann am fad, deanadh e cuairt air an dòigh cheudna, agus cuireadh e grainne peasrach eile air sin, nochdaidh sin an talamh.⁷⁵

⁷² J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1860; new ed. Edinburgh, 1994), p. 503.

⁷³ Thomson, p. lxix.

⁷⁴ Vincent p. 19.

⁷⁵ Clàr 58, p. 46.

In the same way he explains that it is the earth rather than the sun and stars which is moving and compares this with an example based in the concrete experience of most Gaels:

Tha mòran an dùil, gu'm bheil a' ghrian agus na reultan, a' ruith gu luath anns na speuraibh mu'n cuairt do'n talamh, nach 'eil a' carachadh as 'aite; ach tha iad air am mealladh an so 'n am barail, ceart mar a ta iad, an uair a ghiùlainear iad seachad gu luath air luing an cois fearainn; oir an sin, tha iad an dùil, nach 'eil an long a' carachadh; ach gu'm bheil am fearann a ruith gu grad seachad orra!⁷⁶

In the same essay he explains the speed at which the earth is travelling - 'sea fichead uair ni's luaithe na peileir gunna-mhòir'.⁷⁷ The same technique is used in his two part essay on slavery and in his essay, 'An Seangan' in which he more or less personifies the ants. The following excerpt in which MacGregor describes the life-cycle of the coral-building zoophytes exemplifies this:

Ann am beagan làithean an déigh dhoibh na h-uighean fhàgail, tha iad a' tòiseachadh air àitean-còmhnuidh a dheanamh dhoibh féin; agus tha e 'na ni iongantach gur ann air uachdar nan àite-còmhnuidh anns an d'rugadh na h-uighean as an d' thainig iad féin, a tha iad a' deanamh sin. Air an dòigh so, tha 'n linn a chaidh seachad air an druideadh a suas, agus air an adhlacadh beò 'n an tighean féin, as nach urrainn iad a chaidh faotuinn a mach, le tighean an sliochd.⁷⁸

MacGregor was not the first to have employed these methods of making the abstract or unfamiliar more comprehensible to the Gael. Caraid nan Gaidheal in his dialogues used the familiar and everyday to explain phenomena outwith the average Gael's range of experience. In 'Comhradh eadar Cuairtear nan Gleann agus Eachann Tirisdeach' Cuairtear describes geysers to Eachann using the analogy of a pipe:

Gabh thusa ma ta pìob thombaca, a h-aon de 'n fheadhainn a's fhaide 's urrainn dhuit fhaotainn; cuir lorg na pìoba 's a' ghealban gus am bi i dearg theth; lion an sin cuach na pìoba le h-uisge, agus feuch leigeadh leis an uisge dol a mach gu h-athaiseach troi 'n fheadan sìos troi' luirg na pìoba agus chì thu gu-n téid e mach dìreach mar a mhinich mi na tobraichean goileach, steall an déigh still, le toirm.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Clàr 11 (b), p. 280.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Clàr 39 (a), p. 554.

⁷⁹ 'Comhradh eadar Cuairtear nan Gleann agus Eachann Tirisdeach', in *Caraid nan Gaidheal*, pp. 164-74 (171).

Elsewhere MacLeod made similar use of a ball of yarn to represent the world, with pins in it to demonstrate a ship sailing from one point to another, losing sight of one pin as it nears the one at the opposite side.⁸⁰ In a similar vein, Donnchadh M. Conall, whose 1856 *Reul-Eolas* is discussed in Chapter 7: The Natural World, illustrates the distance between the earth and the sun with his explanation that if a railway were built between them it would take over two hundred years to reach one from the other even if a train were to travel day and night. For the distance between the earth and the sun, he explains, it would take a horse travelling twenty miles in an hour, and running for ten hours in a day, thirteen hundred years before he would reach one from the other.⁸¹

It was not unusual, therefore, for nineteenth century Gaelic writers to avoid the conceptual in favour of concrete visual images. This enables the writer to incorporate a quality which is fundamental to orality. Gaelic storytelling is essentially visual in nature, as D. A. Macdonald's article 'Visual Memory', based on an interview with South Uist storyteller Donald Alasdair Johnson, reveals. Johnson explains the importance of the visual for recalling the tale saying, 'Feumaidh tu bhith 'ga faicinn na dealbh romhad air neò cha bhi beachd agad orra'.⁸² John MacInnes, commenting on the vividness of oral tales, observed that a dull storyteller soon loses his audience.⁸³ The examples already given from MacGregor's essays are inherently visual, perhaps indicating an awareness that the printed word was likely to be read aloud for an audience. Another example of this highly visual quality in MacGregor's writing is to be found in the essay on coral which also demonstrates his skill as a writer:

Tha na creagan *corail* air an dealbhadh de gach uile chumhachd. Tha cuid ag èirigh suas o ghrunnd na mara mar chraobhan maiseach, a' sìneadh a-mach am meuran agus am meanglain air gach taobh. Tha cuid eile a' fàs suas mar phreasanaich, agus mar luibheannach aillidh fon lan bhath, agus a' nochdadh nan dath as boidhiche agus as soilleire. Tha na dathan a chithear air na coilltean *corail* sin anabarrach maiseach. Tha dearg, donn, buidhe, uaine, gorm agus

⁸⁰ 'Comhradh na h-Atha' in *Caraid nan Gaidheal*, pp. 92 - 103.

⁸¹ Donnchadh M. Conall, *Reul-Eolas: anns am bheil Cunntas air Cuspairibh An Rian-Ghreine agus Fath-Sgrìobhadh, 's am bheil Gearr-shealladh air na Reultaibh Suidhichte* (Edinburgh, 1856), p. 67.

⁸² D. A. Macdonald, 'A Visual Memory', *SS*, 22 (1978), pp. 1-26 (3).

⁸³ John MacInnes, 'Short Stories' in *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*, ed. by Derick S. Thomson (Glasgow, 1983), p. 279.

gach atharrachadh dreach eile rim faicinn air an cur gu h-innleachdach air feadh a cheile, anns a' chorail.⁸⁴

Here MacGregor has created a beautiful verbal picture which is based on both the familiar - trees and bushes - and the visual. Again his use of pairs of words is evident, contributing to the measured pace of his prose. Equally vivid is his description of the stars on a frosty winter night 'an crochadh mar lòchranaibh drilinneach'.⁸⁵

By contributing explanations of astronomy and coral to journals, writers like MacGregor were expanding the universe of discourse of the Gaelic language. It is interesting therefore to note that his use of English loan words is minimal, as indeed is his use of calques in his writing as a whole. Once again there are indications that he was aware of his audience. He consistently avoids the possible complexities of scientific language and thus there is less pressure upon him to use loan words. In writing on astronomy he glosses the phrase 'a' cur char di air a mul fein' in both Gaelic and English - 'Aisil - Béurla, Axis'.⁸⁶ In 'An Coral' he glosses 'barra-chaol (pyramids)'. Generally, however, his explanations do not require either the borrowing of English words or the coining of new Gaelic words. In a dialogue in which his characters discuss the telegraph, steam power, gas and photography, having used 'fios-dealain' for telegram he then opts to use the English word telegraph, either on the assumption that his readers were already familiar with the English form, or perhaps as a means of introducing them to it.⁸⁷ He does the same with 'dealbh-tharruing na gréine' which he explains, 'Goirear anns a' Bhéurla "*Photography*" ris'.⁸⁸ This demonstrates that he was putting into practice his belief that the one language should explain the other, as discussed in Chapter 10. As mentioned above, he does use calques, but not in any great quantity. Unsurprisingly when they do appear they tend to be found in the more colloquial language of his dialogues, for example: 'Tuitidh Seonaid òg air a cosaibh an la sin'; 'Cha mhòr a shaoileadh tu dheth'; 'Dean

⁸⁴ Clàr 39 (a), pp. 554-55.

⁸⁵ Clàr 8 (b), p. 227.

⁸⁶ Clàr 10 (b), p. 251.

⁸⁷ Clàr 107, pp. 71-72.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 74.

thu fein aig a' bhaile'; Ciod a th'agad r'a ràdh air do shon fein?'; 'Fhuair e a chorragan a losgadh'.⁸⁹

Returning to instances of MacGregor adapting his style to suit his subject matter, this is evident in three of his pieces on moral improvement. In 'Ionraic Mac-Ailein' he uses verses in prose, imitating syntactically and lexically the form and style of the Bible, thus lending weight to his message,

1. Agus bha duine ann d'am b'ainm Ionraic MacAilein, do thrèubh nan Gaidheal, á baile a' Chamloch, ann an crìochaibh na Gaidhealtachd, agus ann an siar-shraithibh na dùthcha.
2. Agus tharladh gun robh Ionraic 'na dhuine glic agus foghlaimte, ach trid freasdail an Tighearna thàinig àmhghar agus bròn 'na char, ghearradh as a theaghlach gu lèir, thàinig am bàs gu h-obann air a' mhnaoi, agus air a' chuid mhac agus nighean, agus bhuaileadh e fhèin le laigsinn agus tinneas.⁹⁰

The repetition of 'agus' at the beginning of each verse clearly has the Bible as its template, and 'tharladh' too is indicative of a Biblical text. There are times when his Biblical style slips as when he begins a 'verse' with the colloquial 'air là de na laithibh', or when using dialogue within a verse he writes, "'Freasdail Dè! an e a thuirt thu? Chan eil mi creidsinn ann an Dia, no ann am Freasdail no ann an Slànaighear'. In the same style is 'An Druidh' published in the *Highlander*, which tells of a widow's son returning home, in disguise, after thirty years abroad:

1. Agus tharladh anns na laithibh deireannach dhe'n bhliadhna, aig dol fodha greine, gu'n do bhuaill neach eigin aig dorus tigh boirionnaich bhoichd a bha 'na bantraich.
2. Air do'n dorus a bhi air fhosgladh, chunncas duine uamharra an sin 'na sheasamh, a grad bhuaill le h-eagal gach beag agus mor 'san fhardaich.⁹¹

While the format is visually that of the Bible, MacGregor does not use Biblical language with the same consistency as in 'Ionraic Mac-Ailein', and the result is a text closer to a folktale which happens to be laid out in verses after the style of the Bible.

⁸⁹ Clàr 85, p. 210; Clàr 121, p. 163; Clàr 80, p. 136; Clàr 108, p. 105; Clàr 78, p. 114.

⁹⁰ Clàr 102, p. 327. This text is included in Appendix 2 in its entirety. For further discussion see Chapter 9.

⁹¹ Clàr 174, p. 3.

What this chapter demonstrates is the extent to which MacGregor's writing was shaped by a range of inherently Gaelic influences and it shows that he used existing templates, both written and oral, on which to base his writing so as to make them as accessible to Gaels as possible. Modelling written prose on the spoken word, whether that of sermons or of everyday discourse, may have eased the transition for Gaels from being listeners to readers.

CHAPTER 5

FAMINE AND EMIGRATION

Any study pertaining to the Highlands in the nineteenth century is likely at least to touch on some of the contemporary social issues such as famine, emigration and clearance, and this one is no different. Alexander MacGregor's life spanned the period of devastating famine and emigration in the period 1830-1850, and also the beginning of a period of land agitation in the 1870s. This chapter will consider his response to these social issues through his writings in both Gaelic and English.

The clergy, as a body, whether Established or Free Church, have gained an unenviable reputation for their actions, or indeed often for their lack of them, in this period of clearance due to the fact that ministers' leadership tended to go no further than the spiritual in this period of social crisis. Two useful studies in this area are Alexander B. Mearns' 'The Minister and the Bailiff: A Study of Presbyterian Clergy in the Northern Highlands During the Clearances', with its emphasis on Sutherland, and Donald C. Smith's study of the Church's role in social criticism, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest*.¹ As tends to happen in discussions of the clearances, generalisations (and thus exaggerations) abound. Just as not all landlords were mercenary and merciless towards their tenantry, so not all ministers deserve the odium which tends to be directed at them. The infamous clearances which took place on the Sutherland estates in the second decade of the nineteenth century are a frequently cited example of the iniquitous behaviour of landlords and factors, and so too the clergy received much unfavourable publicity at the hands of Donald MacLeod, an eye-witness to the Sutherland clearances whose letters on the subject were published in *Gloomy Memories*. MacLeod's comments should perhaps be read with caution, as his own confrontations with the Rev. Hugh MacKenzie may have coloured his attitude. He wrote:

The clergy also, whose duty it is to denounce the oppressors, and aid the oppressed, have all, the whole seventeen parish ministers in Sutherlandshire,

¹ Alexander B. Mearns, 'The Minister and the Bailiff: A Study of Presbyterian Clergy in the Northern Highlands During the Clearances', *RSCHS*, 24 Pt 1 (1990), 53-75. Donald C. Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest* (New York, 1987).

with one exception, found their account in abetting the wrong-doers, exhorting the people to quiet submission, helping to stifle their cries, telling them that all their sufferings came from the hand of God, and was a just punishment for their sins.²

and that

They basked in the sunshine of favour: they were the bosom friends of the factors and new tenants . . . and had the honour of occasional visits from the proprietors themselves. They were always employed to explain and interpret to the assembled people the orders and designs of the factors; and they did not spare their college paint on these occasions. Black was made white, or white black, as it answered their duty.³

Mearns admits that the bulk of information recounting the role of ministers in the northern Highlands during the early nineteenth century clearances relates to Sutherland, and thus it may be that a certain amount of the criticism aimed at the clergy in this particular area stems from the high-profile criticism of Donald MacLeod. Alexander MacKenzie, talking of the nineteenth century clergy in general terms, wrote of the 'mean use many of these ministers made of the power which their faithful flock believed was vested in them'.⁴ In the *Highlander*, correspondents referred to 'the attitude of apparent indifference which the clergy seem to occupy in this region . . . [to] the economic arrangements of an estate' and to 'the hand of the oppressor strengthened by the hand of the Church'.⁵

² Donald MacLeod, *Gloomy Memories* contained in Alexander MacKenzie's *The History of the Highland Clearances* (Edinburgh, 1991), p. 7. The one exception amongst the clergy was the Rev. Alexander Sage of Kildonan, father of the Rev. Donald Sage whose own account of the clearances can be studied in *Memorabilia Domestica or Parish Life in the North of Scotland* (Wick, 1889). He writes of the clearances in Kildonan 'Sellar laboured hard to involve my father and mother in the criminality of these proceedings, but he utterly failed', p. 249.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

⁴ Alexander MacKenzie, *The History of the Highland Clearances* (Stirling, 1882), p. xi.

⁵ *TH*, 11 September 1875, p. 7; *TH*, 30 October 1875, p. 7.

Eric Richards sees the conventional historian's view of the Highland clergy as 'the Quislings of modern Highland history' as being close to a caricature.⁶ Sorley MacLean has suggested, somewhat reluctantly, that 'it may be that the clergy's silent acquiescence and even occasional open support for the landlord has been exaggerated', yet the evidence of his own poetry says differently.⁷ In *An Cuilthionn* he writes,

'Se 'n Diabhul fhéin a thog am mùr seo
A chur air falach Rubha 'n Dùnain:
Cinn-cinnidh is fir-tac a' spùilleadh,
Le cead dhiadhairean a' rùsgadh,
A' togail tuatha 's a' cur bhrùidean.⁸

In this, MacLean was in accord with his Skye predecessor Màiri Mhòr nan Oran, whose song *Fios gu Clach Ard Uige* contains the verse:

Tha luchd-teagaisg cho beag cùraim
Faicinn càramh mo luchd-dùthcha
'S iad cho balbh air anns a' chùbaid
'S ged bu bhrùidean bhiodh 'gan éisdeachd.⁹

It is in this context of general condemnation of the clergy as a body, up to and into the present century, that MacGregor's writings on famine and emigration will be considered.

1836-1841

The parish of Kilmuir in Skye, where Alexander MacGregor was from 1836 until 1851, formed part of Lord MacDonald's estates, which included not only Sleat and Trotternish in Skye but also North Uist. MacGregor refers in 1837 to the MacDonalds having been 'for ages justly distinguished as the best and most indulgent proprietors'.¹⁰ This was at a time when he had not been confirmed as successor to his father as minister of Kilmuir, but would have been seeking to be presented to the

⁶ Eric Richards, 'How Tame were the Highlanders during the Clearances', *SS*, 17 (1973), 35-50, (p. 40-41).

⁷ Sorley MacLean, 'The Poetry of the Clearances' in *Ris a' Bhruthaich*, ed. by William Gillies (Stornoway, 1985), pp. 48-74, (49-50).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁹ D. E. Meek, *Màiri Mhòr nan Oran* (Glasgow, 1977), pp. 73-74.

¹⁰ *NSA*, vol. 14, p. 265.

parish by Lord MacDonald, the sole heritor. His comment, therefore, cannot be said to be unbiased.

In common with many parts of the Highlands and Islands, tenants in Kilmuir found themselves with less land and poorer land in the name of improvement. In the first three decades of the nineteenth century many Highland proprietors saw increased tenantry as an asset, as this provided an increased workforce for the manufacture of kelp. As long as the economy remained relatively healthy, supporting an increasing population did not present a problem. By 1827, however, kelp production was nowhere near as profitable as it had been, due to imported barilla re-entering the British marketplace after the Napoleonic Wars.¹¹ The prevalence of sub-letting, which proprietors did not discourage, and the resulting increase in population, established an economic framework whose fragility was to become evident when the crops failed and famine resulted during the 1830s and 1840s. Of those who have studied the social and economic factors which left the Highlands so vulnerable to agricultural disasters, James Hunter is one of the most extreme in his anti-landlord stance:

Deliberately created by landlords who could not bring themselves to remove it even when it had served its exploitative purpose, that yawning chasm between income and rent was in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the crucial fact of crofting life . . . And in conjunction with the smallness of holdings, the other major consequence of landlords' former need to manoeuvre their small tenants into a position of utter dependence and subservience, it pushed crofters into a virtually complete reliance on one lowly crop: the potato.¹²

In 1836 the potato crop failed in many parts of the Highlands. Alexander MacGregor gives his own account of the effects of this in Kilmuir:

Potatoes were planted, but, from an unaccountable disease in that prolific and alimentary root, as well as from the coldness of the soil, the greater part decayed in the soil. In harvest the unripe fields were deluged with rain. The straw lost its substance. The grain remained unfilled, and the hopes of the husbandman for the support of his family and cattle were simultaneously blasted. For the spring of 1836 the people were ill prepared . . . Already the residence of the clergyman was daily frequented by groups of the helpless, as if he could procure immediate relief. The shores were ransacked late and early,

¹¹ For the effect of the kelp industry on the economy of the Highlands see James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976), pp. 16-20 and pp. 30-48.

¹² Hunter, p. 48.

and at all hours, for sea-weed and shell-fish, to afford a scanty repast. The fields were of unpromising appearance, and, before they arrived at any thing like maturity, October came in, with its piercing frost, and destructive storm of snow. Sad and distressing were the scenes of hardship and want then witnessed.¹³

He attributes the problems to 'an injudicious system of management', but ventures no further with his criticism. Rather he weakens any sense that this is criticism of the estate, by stating that the error of management was that of allowing tenants to marry when not in a position to support a family and the sub-division of land which resulted, suggesting the estate management's error was in fact that of the tenants themselves.

MacGregor was certainly not silent as regards the causes and effects of famine in Skye, to which he himself was an eye-witness. Between 1838 and 1840 he contributed two lengthy articles to Blackwood's *Quarterly Journal of Agriculture*, the first on poverty in the Highlands and the second arguing the case for a government-assisted emigration system.¹⁴ Both these articles outline the economic difficulties which led to famine in the Highlands in 1836-37, and offer MacGregor's opinions as to what measures should be undertaken to avoid a repeat occurrence. Clearly, MacGregor himself saw his writings as representing social criticism, as he addresses these contributing factors in turn, namely (1) an excess of population; (2) early and improvident marriages; (3) the system of sub-dividing land; (4) bad husbandry. These, he concluded, combined with external factors over which the Gaels had no direct control - the decline of the kelp industry, the migration of herring shoals, the fall in the price of black cattle and the failure of the potato crop - to create the potential for wide-scale hardship in the Highlands. The proprietors of Highland estates escape lightly. When MacGregor criticises the lotting system which allows the sub-division of land he remarks that 'This was done with humane and charitable views, to the great personal inconvenience of the proprietors themselves'.¹⁵ Presumably this 'inconvenience' provided the estates with more workers at the time

¹³ NSA, vol. 14, p. 271.

¹⁴ Clàr 1 & 2.

¹⁵ Clàr 226, p. 163.

when the labour intensive kelp industry was at its zenith, and in turn the landlords with an increased rental. Certainly, as far as Lord MacDonald's Skye estates were concerned, this had involved the creation of large sheep farms at the expense of existing tenants at the turn of the nineteenth century. In the period between 1799 and 1803 the rental of these Skye estates rose from £5,550 to £9,690. This 'indulgent' proprietor evicted 267 tenants in 1801 alone, in order to further his estate reforms.¹⁶ MacGregor also insists that some people

Are too apt to lay a great share of the existing poverty to the charge of the Highland proprietors; but it should be taken into consideration, that though the proprietors were in many cases to give a free grant of their lots and crofts to their present occupiers, poverty would not cease after all, owing to an excess of population living under a rude system of husbandry.¹⁷

The closest MacGregor came to criticism of landlords in this period was in the *New Statistical Account*, in which he alluded to the 'injudicious system of management' in Kilmuir which had resulted in a substantial population increase.

MacGregor provides figures for the population of his parish, demonstrating the massive increase which was characteristic of most Highland parishes. The number rose from 1,230 in 1736 to 2,554 in 1801 and to 3,415 in 1831. This can be put into perspective by the fact that of the 521 families resident in the parish in 1840 '231 families have no lands whatever from the proprietor. Of these 231 families, 101 hold shares of lots and crofts as above described, and the remaining 130 families occupy no lands in any shape'.¹⁸

MacGregor's arguments, with regard to over-population, show shades of Malthusian thought, which was central to so much socio-economic discussion in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Rev. Thomas Malthus's theory of population, initially published in 1798, had its basis in the ever-present capacity of population to grow faster than the means of subsistence.¹⁹ This theory was certainly of relevance to the Highlands in the Famine years. Malthus emphasised 'moral restraint' as a means

¹⁶ Hunter, pp. 19-21. Lord MacDonald had fallen heavily into debt at the turn of the century and the day to day management of his estates was handed over to commissioners.

¹⁷ Clàr 226, p. 164.

¹⁸ Clàr 232, p. 432; Clàr 226, p. 163.

¹⁹ D. V. Glass, *An Introduction to Malthus* (London, 1953). Glass provides a comprehensive account of Malthus' theory.

of tackling excess population. By this he meant the postponement of marriage, if indeed marrying at all, in tandem with adherence to strict moral conduct outwith marriage, a policy 'perfectly consistent with virtue and happiness'.²⁰ A fundamental part of Alexander MacGregor's blueprint for the Highlands was that early and 'improvident' marriages be discouraged and that only those in a financial position to support a family should marry, thus reducing the rate of population growth. He stated that this was inextricably linked to the problem of sub-division of crofts, with parents giving some of the land on which they were tenants to their married sons and daughters, thus leaving the populace in general with less land to support them. In this, MacGregor and some proprietors were of a like mind. Giving evidence to a Select Committee in 1841, John Bowie W.S., agent for Lord MacDonald, stated that

On some estates I am connected with, they are forced to abstain from marrying for this reason [i.e. because they cannot get land]; because on estates I well know, it has been distinctly intimated to parties to whom I refer, 'You may marry when you please, but if you marry without having a holding of land upon my property, you must quit the estate next term with your wife'. That has tended to discourage early marriages.²¹

Malthus was not, however, as enthusiastic about the advantages offered by emigration, since he did not believe that it offered the long-term advantages which 'moral restraint' could. Malthus only conceded with reluctance that in the case of the Irish Famines of the 1840s 'a judicious system of emigration' might prove appropriate.²²

Emigration from the Highlands was not a new phenomenon, but had been taking place since the first half of the eighteenth century. Boswell and Johnson, during their tour of the Highlands in 1773, witnessed the departure of an emigrant ship, the *Nestor*, when in Portree.²³ The debate surrounding emigration in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been discussed by Eric Richards at some

²⁰ Ibid., p. 153.

²¹ *Report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Condition of the Population of the Islands and Highlands of Scotland, and into the Practicability of affording the People Relief by means of Emigration*, P.P. (1841), vi, p. 4.

²² Glass, p. 19.

²³ Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, *A Journey to the Hebrides* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 58 and p. 289.

length in *A History of the Highland Clearances*. Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk, was one of those who was active in promoting emigration in the early part of the nineteenth century, and was instrumental in developing Prince Edward Island in Canada as an area for Highland settlement. In 1803 he arranged for the emigration of some 800 Highlanders to Prince Edward Island, the majority of whom were from the Isle of Skye.²⁴ It was exoduses of tenants such as this which alarmed landlords sufficiently to cause them to seek government support in restricting emigration, as a loss of tenants could only result in a fall in their income from rents. The result was the passing of the Passenger Vessels Act of 1803, an Act which, in aiming to protect prospective emigrants from over-crowding and inhumane conditions on board ships, conveniently for proprietors, resulted in a significant reduction in the numbers emigrating from the Highlands and Islands.

By the time that Alexander MacGregor was writing in the late 1830s, the attitudes of proprietors to emigration had changed, now that they were faced with an increased population which the land apportioned to them could not support. In seeking long-term solutions to the problems facing the Highlands, MacGregor advocated the use of emigration, but only in conjunction with other measures such as the discouraging of early marriage and the prevention of sub-division of lands. Writing for the *Quarterly Journal of Agriculture*, to those who denied that emigration represented any solution he pointed out the difference between excess population in cities and in rural areas. Agreeing that the transplantation of urban residents would merely allow others to fill their empty flats and tenements, he argued that when poor Gaels were assisted to emigrate, their vacant property could then be added to a neighbour's, thus effectively beginning to reverse the effects of sub-division and the concomitant rise in population. This provided him with the opportunity to cite the example of Lord MacDonald's Skye estates where this process was already underway.²⁵

MacGregor was far from being the only clergyman to support emigration. In his evidence to the Select Committee of 1841, the Rev. John MacLeod stated that he

²⁴ Eric Richards, *A History of the Highland Clearances* vol. 2 (Beckenham, 1985), p. 218.

²⁵ Clàr 2, p. 280.

was able 'to show from reports and letters now before them that in 46 cases out of 49 the clergymen of Highland parishes, to whom the question was specially put, recommended an extensive emigration as a remedy for the poverty and distress with which the country was afflicted'.²⁶ Norman MacLeod (Caraid nan Gaidheal), in his evidence to the same committee, was also of the opinion that emigration was the only solution to the pressure of population upon the land. In his account of the parish of Strath, Skye, in the *New Statistical Account*, the Rev. John MacKinnon advocates 'the establishment of a systematic emigration conducted upon proper principles'.²⁷ This support for emigration by so many Highland ministers was in line with most proprietors' views. It would however, be an injustice to many of these ministers to suggest that they held these opinions solely because that was the accepted establishment view in the mid nineteenth century. It must be borne in mind that the clergy were witnessing more poverty and distress than most other men of the middle and upper classes, and that many genuinely believed that emigration would help alleviate the suffering of their parishioners.

MacGregor was not uncritical of emigration which had been carried out prior to the time of his writing. He refers to the summer of 1837 during which some 609 people departed on board the *William Nichol* and the *Mid-Lothian* bound for Australia. The majority of those emigrating were from Skye. This he judged to be 'a most erroneous system, which should be carefully avoided in future'.²⁸ Those beyond a certain age were excluded from leaving and in this way some 264 people were left behind whose only means of support had left for Australia. Apart from the fact that it did not make economic sense to remove only the young and healthy, MacGregor described the system as being 'characterised by a degree of cruelty (which was undoubtedly unforeseen by the promoters of it, who intended everything for the best), which renders it revolting to the nicer feelings of a civilised public'.²⁹ Instead he suggested that families should be allowed to emigrate en masse.

²⁶ P.P. (1841) vi, p. 111.

²⁷ *NSA*, vol. 14, pp. 300-17 (314).

²⁸ *Clàr* 227, p. 217.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

There are times when MacGregor's tone can seem somewhat harsh to us, as when he refers to 'disposing of surplus population of the country by emigration' and states, 'Should the huts of the poor and helpless cotter be vacated, the same may be pulled down whenever the inmates are transplanted'.³⁰ Yet in the context of the period, it is not so much a callous tone as one motivated by the exigency of the situation. At no point does MacGregor advocate a system of compulsory emigration. Instead, he believes it to be one option within a package of reforms:

Amid so extensive a community several will, no doubt, be actuated by various inclinations. Of those who may be fit subjects for emigration, some may be willing to avail themselves of it, and some may not. Some may have a wish to engage in the different departments of industry at home, while others may not feel so inclined. It is therefore desirable that the promoters of the Highlanders' welfare should, in a sense, endeavour to be 'all things to all men' and thus render the means of relief as various as may be consistent with prudence and judicious arrangement.³¹

In 1840 MacGregor contributed 'Mu thimchioll imrich nan Gaidheal do dh'America' to *Cuairtear nan Gleann*. Here his choice of language, in addition to his choice of publication, indicates a different audience from those who would have been reading the *Quarterly Journal of Agriculture*. Here he was writing for prospective emigrants within the Highlands and for those who may have had some influence over them. He begins by lamenting the necessity of emigration, then proceeds to outline the benefits which it will bring for those emigrating, for those remaining and for those countries in which people settle. The main purpose of his letter was with regard to between 600 and 700 people who are about to leave Trotternish in Skye for Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton. They lacked suitable clothes for the long cold winters of North America and were too poor to buy any. In this MacGregor was seeking help, and refers to the successful efforts by MacLeod to raise money during the famine of 1836-37. MacGregor was not unaware of the irony of the situation, as the following quotation demonstrates:

Ged a chithear a' chaora mhór ach gann an uile sgìreachdaibh na h-Alba, le gnuis aoidheil, agus le a rùsg mìn agus tròm, ag ionaltradh ann an aois-làraich nan tighean anns an d'àruicheadh iomadh curaidh treun, an déigh sin

³⁰ Clàr 2, pp. 287-88.

³¹ Clàr 231, p. 400.

uile, tha a' chuid a's mò do na Gaidheil eu-comasach air uiread do na rùsgaibh sin fhaotuinn 'sa sgeadaicheas iad gu dol mar bu mhiann leo, gu tigh Dhé a dh'éisdeachd r'a fhocal an sin air a shearmonachadh.³²

Norman MacLeod gave literature pertaining to emigration a prominent place in the pages of *Cuairtear nan Gleann*. In fact, John Bowie, in his evidence to the Select Committee, suggested that the journal was a contributing factor to the increasing numbers wishing to leave the Highlands.³³ MacLeod himself told the same Committee that 'one great object of the publication at present is, to instruct the people on the subject of emigration; they have been deceived by private adventurers; they become jealous of private adventurers'.³⁴ In the three years of its existence, twenty-one separate pro-emigration articles appeared in it, not including news items which featured similarly oriented information. So prominent was emigration in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* that to some the periodical's stance was indistinguishable from the blatant propaganda of emigration agents. In the seventh issue the editor issued the following disclaimer: 'Fhuair sinn litir no dha a' feòraich an robh sinn air ar pàigheadh leis a' chomunn ann an Sasunn air son Gàidheil a chur imrich agus 'gar diomoladh airson a leithid. Tha againn ri ràdh nach 'eil aon fhocal firinn anns na tha iad mar seo a' cur as ar leth . . .'.³⁵

1846-1851

In the autumn of 1846, known variously as 'a' Bhliadhna Ghais am Buntàta', 'a' Bhliadhna Lobh am Buntàta', 'a' Bhliadhna dh'Fholbh am Buntàta' and 'a' Bhliadhna Thàinig an Cnàmh dhan Bhuntàta', the potato crop failed once again in the Highlands, reducing much of the population to starvation.³⁶ Whereas in the period 1836-1841 Alexander MacGregor had contributed articles to the *Quarterly Journal of Agriculture*, no such articles by him exist from this period. Instead we have a number of letters which he wrote between 1846 and 1849 laying out the problems

³² Clàr 5, p. 147.

³³ P.P. (1841), vi, p. 15.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

³⁵ CG, 7 (1840), 168.

³⁶ For a discussion of these names and the areas in which they were used see Ragnall MacilleDhuibh, 'The Year of the Black Ugliness', *West Highland Free Press*, 6 June 1997.

facing his parishioners and seeking assistance on their behalf. He also contributed four articles in Gaelic to *Fear-Tathaich nam Beann* on the subject of emigration. The fact that from 1844 he was minister of Kilmuir (as opposed to merely a licentiate), gave him the authority to communicate with the likes of the Home Secretary and with Captain Robert Elliot, Inspector General for the Edinburgh Section of the Central Board of Management for Highland Relief.

In October 1846 MacGregor wrote to the Home Secretary, Sir George Grey, outlining the distress which the residents of his parish were experiencing as a direct result of their crops' failure.

The condition of this parish, in common with all other parishes around, is at present deplorably alarming . . . unless relief be immediately afforded by Government many deaths must unquestionably take place from the actual want of food . . . I may state that the population of this parish is at present about 4000 souls. Of these upwards of 2000 have no land from the proprietor. They had, indeed, small patches from the occupiers of land for planting potatoes, but from these patches they have this season derived no benefit whatever, as the potatoes have totally failed. These 2000 souls are now reduced to a state of abject famine, and live for the most part on sea-weed and scanty supplies of shell-fish. On the other hand, nearly 2000 souls occupy crofts of land, but the returns of the same, in the shape of corn-crop, will not be sufficient to afford them support for three months to come. In less time, indeed, the whole population will become the victims of scarcity and famine.³⁷

Emphasising the need for 'immediate relief', MacGregor cites the example of Ireland, to which the government had awarded money for the relief of distress, and pleads: 'Surely the equally necessitous condition of the *peaceful*, the *loyal*, and the *deserving* population of the Hebrides *cannot*, and *will* not be slighted or overlooked by Government!' The reply which MacGregor receives is to the effect that a ship will be arriving in Portree shortly with meal 'to be sold at a fair market price'.³⁸

MacGregor was not alone amongst the Skye clergy in petitioning the Home Secretary. The Revs Luke McIver of Sleat, Duncan MacCallum of Duirinish and Angus Martin of Snizort also wrote to him in the autumn of 1846 seeking assistance

³⁷ Clàr 268.

³⁸ *Correspondence from July 1846 to February 1847, relating to the Measures adopted for the Relief of the Distress in Scotland*, P.P. (1847), LIII, p. 145, reply to the Rev. A. MacGregor, 3 November 1846.

and enclosing petitions signed by their parishioners. Clearly then the clergymen were not idle during this period, although in the case of Skye, at least, they are quick to praise proprietors' actions, as when MacGregor comments on the 'liberality of Lord MacDonald'. The clergy were in effect seeking help for their parishioners within the parameters of estate policy. The question of the Drainage Act is one example of MacGregor echoing the views of estate management, while also expressing concern over the condition of the tenantry. This Act enabled government loans to be made to landlords for draining work to be carried out on their estates in order to provide employment for tenants. In the view of one of Lord MacDonald's agents in Skye, Alexander MacKinnon, 'if Government cannot be induced to come forward with some measure for the general employment of the people beyond that afforded by the Drainage Act, which is far too complicated, as well as too limited in its field of operation, to be made applicable to our wants I see nothing before us but the prospect of anarchy and confusion, such as now exist in Ireland . . .'³⁹ MacGregor, in the same month, writes of the Drainage Act that 'its machinery is too complicated, its provisions too contracted, and its operations by far too tedious for the alarming crisis'.⁴⁰

MacGregor's endeavours on behalf of the people of Kilmuir went further than letter-writing. In a letter of February 1849, he states that 'I myself have offered a large piece of ground to the neighbouring cottars to be tilled in the system in question, and have also agreed to furnish the seed-corn, yet I am unable to get anyone to accept of my offer because the want of food urges them to adhere daily to the test-operations. If matters continue thus, these poor families can sow nothing, and of course can reap nothing in harvest'.⁴¹ MacGregor's contribution to the *New Statistical Account* states that his glebe consists of 35 acres of land which includes both pasture and arable ground. This offer which he made to his neighbours demonstrates just how different he was from those moderate ministers who were accused of being more

³⁹ P.P. (1847) LIII, p. 124, letter from A. K. MacKinnon to Lord MacDonald, 20 October 1846. T. M. Devine in *The Great Highland Famine* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 100-02 discusses the Drainage Act and its benefits and drawbacks for Highland estates.

⁴⁰ Clàr 268, p. 144.

⁴¹ Clàr 274.

interested in farming their land than attending to their parishioners. Nor was he a minister in the same mould as the Rev. Hugh MacKenzie whom Donald MacLeod accused of having tenants removed from land which he was about to acquire.⁴²

The test-operations to which MacGregor refers in his letter were those introduced by the Central Relief Board, which in its desire to prevent 'social and moral disintegration' in the Highlands, required those in need of relief to carry out an eight hour day's work in exchange for 1lb of meal. Figures published by Tom Devine indicate that in 1849 33% of the population of Skye was in receipt of relief from the Central Board.⁴³ Opposition to this system of relief was strong, whether from such newspapers as the *Inverness Advertiser*, from the clergy or from the population itself. The destitution test created a situation whereby those who were destitute were required to occupy their time with working for a pittance of meal, but this did not allow them to improve their situation as the work was not of any practical benefit to themselves beyond providing this basic food allowance, and it deprived them of time which could have been spent cultivating crops for the next season. It was this which MacGregor saw as the primary flaw, stating 'I would be delighted to see that relief would be allotted to crofters for trenching, fencing and draining their land (under proper regulations) and that relief would be allowed to such as have no lands for road-working and such like work. The cultivation of the soil is the most important subject that can engage the Committee's attention. Until that be resorted to here on a large and judicious scale, poverty will ever exist, if the population will ever be dependent and helpless'.⁴⁴ In 1848 MacGregor had sent a petition to W. F. Skene of the Central Board from the people of Kilmuir in which they requested 'a more reasonable and adequate system of relief, for which a reasonable amount of labour will be readily given'.⁴⁵ Thus it is evident that he was actively involved in trying to improve social conditions by means of official channels.

⁴² MacKenzie (Edinburgh, 1991), p. 65.

⁴³ Devine (1988), p. 45.

⁴⁴ Clàr 274.

⁴⁵ SRO, HD 12/21, Petition to W. F. Skene, Secretary of the Edinburgh Section of the Highland Relief Board from the heads of families, and others in the parish of Kilmuir, Isle of Skye.

Writing some thirty years later about the Central Board MacGregor's criticism of its operation was more forthright. In an additional part to his series of articles on Highland Destitution which had first appeared in 1838, he complains of the fund's expenditure on all its officials, and of those in authority being strangers to the areas which they were paid to supervise. He goes on to say,

Inspectors-general, inspectors, sub-inspectors, and an indefinite host of underlings were simultaneously appointed . . . viewing the matter in the light of common sense, how was it physically possible for those gentlemen, entire strangers, to manage with any degree of propriety and justice, the vast districts over which they were supposed to have surveillance. It is true that they had their celebrated test-regulations, as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians - they had their staff of sub-officials, generally local parties, on whose representations they had entirely to depend, and who from the nature of their duties, were apt to yield to the influences of partiality, favouritism, and flattery. The system thus pursued was not only inadequate, but absolutely ruinous to the people.⁴⁶

He proceeds to demonstrate further the 'mismanagement of this great charity' by contrasting it with the local committee through which relief had been dispersed during the famine of 1836-37. Instead of enabling the poor to retain what stock they owned, as had happened ten years earlier, the regulations of the Central Board required those seeking relief to 'dispose of their cows, horses, sheep, crops, seed-corn, domestic articles, and, in short, with every moveable piece of rude furniture they possessed, before each grown-up person would receive one pound of oatmeal a day (of value about three half pence), in lieu of eight hours labour!'⁴⁷ Clearly, the time which had lapsed made MacGregor feel more comfortable in voicing more strongly the deficiencies which he had witnessed in the administration of the Central Board in the late 1840s.

For all that MacGregor was very aware of the causes of the famine and its effect on his parishioners, he generally sidesteps the apportioning of blame by referring to 'the prevailing famine with which it has been the will of the Great Ruler of all things to afflict this quarter of the kingdom'.⁴⁸ He also drew upon Divine Will

⁴⁶ Clàr 232, p. 439.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 440.

⁴⁸ Clàr 5, p. 144.

to give the highest possible sanction to emigration, observing, 'Tha e taitneach gu'n do sholair Freasdal an Tighearna àite freagarrach dh' ionnsuidh am feùd iad dol'.⁴⁹ He was far from being alone in voicing this belief. During the Sutherland Clearances, Donald MacLeod laid at the clergy's door the accusation that they 'maintained that the whole was a merciful interposition of Providence to bring them to repentance, rather than to send them all to hell, as they so richly deserved'.⁵⁰ *Caraid nan Gaidheal*, in a dialogue in which he promotes emigration, has one character express the same view: 'Cha chreid mi nach e toil an fhreasdail sinn g'a fàgail - nach d'fhàinig plàigh air a' bhuntàta fhéin - cha chinn lus no bàrr mar a b' àbhaist da; cha-n urrainn sinn a' mhòine a chaoineachadh; nach d'fhàg an sgadan ar cladaichean? nach 'eil gort' agus ganntar 'an déigh feòil dhaoine bochda 'chnàmh'.⁵¹ It has been claimed that the Highland clergy 'were the victims of disastrous theological error brought about by their rigid deterministic understanding of God's providence. This was the error of regarding every temporal event and activity - including all the evil and injustice caused by human wickedness - as somehow the positive expression of the will of God'.⁵² In MacGregor's case, I would argue that although he may indeed have been a victim of theological error, he did not use this as a means of preaching passivity to his parishioners. Rather, it was only when writing in English, and for the consumption of landlords and government officials, that he attributed the famine to Divine Providence, making it clear that he was not blaming them for the situation. The only Gaelic article in which he comes close to invoking Divine Providence for the famine, although only by implication, was one of 1849 in which he describes various volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, in other countries, which are a demonstration 'gu bheil an Ti a's àirde ag éigheach an aghaidh an uile, 's gu bheil a riaghladh neo-mhearachdach a' nochdadh gur mòr aingidheachd an duine air an talamh'.⁵³

⁴⁹ Clàr 5, p. 146.

⁵⁰ MacKenzie, p. 31.

⁵¹ 'Comhradh eadar Fionnladh Piobaire, Màiri agus Para Mor' in *Caraid nan Gaidheal*, ed. by Rev. A. Clerk (Edinburgh, 1899), pp. 115-23, (119).

⁵² Smith, pp. 138-39.

⁵³ Clàr 41, p. 576.

Emigration

Alexander MacGregor, in the later 1840s, continued to support emigration as one means of alleviating the socio-economic crisis facing the Highlands. In these later years of the decade this manifests itself in four articles in Gaelic which he contributed to *Fear-Tathaich nam Beann* in 1848 and 1849. Two of these, 'Cunntas air Eilean Eoin an America mu Thuath' parts I and II are general accounts of Prince Edward Island; 'Cunntas air Ceap Bretoin an America mu Thuath' provides similar information about Cape Breton; and the final one, 'Comhairlean do luchd-imirich 'dh'ionnsuidh America', gives more general advice relating to emigration.⁵⁴

In his emigration article contributed to *Cuairtear nan Gleann* in 1840, MacGregor writes, 'Tha eadar sè agus seachd céud anam a' cur rompa dol air imrich ann an ùine ghoirid a sgìreachdaibh Throternis 'san Eilean Sgiathanach a dh'ionnsuidh Eilein Eoin agus Ceap-Bhretoin an America'.⁵⁵ It is estimated that in 1840 and 1841 over 1800 people left Skye for Prince Edward Island alone, the greatest number of Scottish emigrants to reach that island at any one time.⁵⁶ Mike Kennedy has claimed that of all areas of Scotland from which the settlers of Prince Edward Island originated, it was with Skye that the links were strongest and that Skye 'exhibited the most consistent pattern of sustained emigration and settlement' in this part of Canada.⁵⁷

In the light of this emigration pattern, MacGregor's interest in and knowledge about Prince Edward Island in particular is understandable. The sources of information which enabled him to write in as much detail as he did about Prince Edward Island require some more consideration. There is no evidence to suggest that MacGregor himself had travelled overseas at any point, so it is highly unlikely that he was providing an eye-witness account. There are however two main sources of information which would have been available to him. The first of these is the first-hand accounts of other Gaels who had settled there. MacGregor and his father, in

⁵⁴ Clàr 28; Clàr 29; Clàr 30; Clàr 37.

⁵⁵ Clàr 5, p. 146.

⁵⁶ Mike Kennedy, 'Is leis an Tighearna an talamh agus an làn (the earth and all that it contains belong to God): The Scottish Gaelic settlement history of Prince Edward Island' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1995). This figure was provided by Mike Kennedy.

⁵⁷ Kennedy, p. 410

their professional capacity alone, would have derived information on such distant places from the letters of emigrants both to themselves and to parishioners, as the minister would often be called upon to read letters to those unable to do so for themselves. Robert MacGregor certainly remained in contact with at least one former parishioner who settled in Prince Edward Island. Reference is made to this in Jean MacLennan's *Shore to Shore*, a study of the Rev. John MacLennan, minister of Belfast, Prince Edward Island. She quotes from a letter of July 1830 which Robert MacGregor wrote to Allan Macdonald who had settled in Orwell Bay. MacGregor thanks Macdonald for the letter he had sent informing him of his safe arrival and says how pleased he is that 'the face of the country pleases you'.⁵⁸ Another form of first-hand information was that from fellow ministers who had visited Canada, such as the General Assembly's deputation, sent to visit Church of Scotland congregations there, including Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton. This deputation of 1845 included the Rev. Norman MacLeod (son of Caraid nan Gaidheal) and his uncle, the Rev. John MacLeod of Morvern.⁵⁹

The second source of information relating to Canada which was available to MacGregor was published accounts. When considering which of these he made use of - and there were a number available by the 1840s - one might have expected him to draw upon the first book of its kind in Gaelic, a guide for prospective emigrants to Canada, *Ceann-iùil an fhir-imrich* by Robert MacDougall, not least because it was heavily advertised in *Cuairtear nan Gleann*. It offers advice as to the type of emigrants best suited for life in Canada, the preparations which should be made for leaving, details of different parts of Canada, information about cultivation, prices, and other things. Yet detailed comparison shows that this book was not a source of information for MacGregor's writing. For example, MacDougall makes a point of recommending that emigrants avoid Cape Breton, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, writing of the first of these: 'Is e is fuaire agus is miosa fearann, agus o'n is e tha luchd an airgid agus an fhiosrachaidh a' toirt Chanada orra agus a' fàgail a' Chiop 'nan

⁵⁸ Jean M. MacLennan, *From Shore to Shore* (Edinburgh, 1977), p. 31.

⁵⁹ Rev. Donald MacLeod, *Memoir of Norman MacLeod D.D.* vol. 1 (London, 1876). Chapter 10 discusses this visit to North America, pp. 234-52.

déigh'.⁶⁰ One book, however, which MacGregor seems to have read is John MacGregor's *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America*, first published in 1828. There are no references to it anywhere in MacGregor's articles, but the bulk, if not all, of MacGregor's information seems to be based on it. Additionally, the structure of Alexander MacGregor's articles and John MacGregor's book are similar, beginning by describing the geographical position of Prince Edward Island. Both then proceed to describe the three counties which make up the island, albeit in less depth in the Gaelic article, and subsequently Alexander MacGregor covers some of the subjects touched upon in *Historical and Descriptive Sketches*, such as the climate, crops, trees, livestock, wild animals and fish. Here is the description of Indians fishing at night, first from *Historical and Descriptive Sketches* (1828), then from MacGregor's second Gaelic essay 'Cunntas air Ceap Bretoin an America mu Thuath' (1848):

Their torches are made of the outer rind of the birch tree, fixed within a split made to receive the same in the end of a stick about four or five feet long. When lighted it is placed in the prow of the bark canoe of the Indian, near which he stands with a foot on each gunnel, and in a situation so ticklish, as to require the tact of a master to preserve his balance, which he does however, with apparent ease. A boy, or sometimes his squaw (wife), paddles the canoe slowly along, while with a spear, the handle of which is from fifteen to twenty feet long, he is so dextrous and sharp sighted, that he never misses the fish at which he darts.⁶¹

Theid iad a mach air sgoth eutrom le lèus-sholusaibh a' lasadh. Tha na leòis so air an deanamh de rusg na craoibhe-beithe. Gabhar maide cuig no sea throidhean ann am fad, agus nithear sgoltadh 'na cheann. Sàthar an rusg beithe 'san sgoltadh so, cuirear teine ris, agus suidhichear am maide solais so aig toiseach an sgoth. Seasaidh an t-Innseanach goirid o'n t-solus le cas air béul-mòr na sgoth air gach taobh; agus le sleagh no morghath, fichead no cuig troidhe fichead ann am fad, aige 'na laimh. Ged is ciogailteach an t-àit' anns am bheil e, seasaidh e ann gu daingeann le 'shuil suidhichte gu géur air an uisge. Gluaisidh a' bhean an sgoth gu còmhnard, mall, le ràmh agus aon uair 's gu'm faic a companach an t-iasg, ni e cuimse air leis a' mhorghath, agus tha e co ealanta, géur-shùlach, as gur h-ainneamh leis aon bhuille iomrallachadh.⁶²

⁶⁰ Rob MacDhughail, *Ceann-iùil an Fhir-imrich* (Glasgow, 1841), p. 139.

⁶¹ John MacGregor, *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America* (London, 1828), p. 33.

⁶² Clàr 30, pp. 237-38.

This demonstrates that John MacGregor's account was one of the sources of information which Alexander MacGregor drew upon in his writing. He may have chosen not to draw upon MacDhughail's *Ceann-iùil*, because of its recommendation to avoid Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, to which many Gaels had already emigrated. MacGregor may have been attempting to address this imbalance by providing information in Gaelic about these areas, and also perhaps preferring not to duplicate information which already existed in Gaelic.

Many of the Gaelic articles on emigration published in the 1840s enthused so much about the possible destinations of emigrants that they highlight only the positive and lean towards exaggeration. One anonymous article about New Zealand which appeared in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* reads 'cha 'n eil glinn air thalamh is àille, is feuraiche 's is toraiche na tha 'm measg nam beannta mòra so'.⁶³ Another anonymous article proclaims of North America,

Cha 'n eil cosnaiche slàn fallain tha eòlach air obair, agus toileach obair a dheanamh, nach fhaod fearann saor a bhi aige dha féin ann am fìor bheagan bhliadhnaichean . . . faodaidh e chur cùl a làimhe an ceann trì no ceithir a bhliadhnaichean na chuireas 'na chomas àite seasgair fhaotainn da féin agus a ràdh, 'Tha mi nis air mo dhùnan féin, agus feuch có chuireas dheth mi'.⁶⁴

This last excerpt makes years of hard work sound very easy, and it unashamedly plays upon readers' disillusionment with life in the Highlands. It is unlikely that this was written by MacGregor. Although he writes of the Canadian colonies in similarly glowing terms, his writings are nonetheless tempered with caution. He suggests that readers should think carefully about whether or not they are really suited to a new life abroad, writing 'ged nach eil sinn idir 'ga chomhairleachadh gu fuireach, cha bhrosnaich sinn e gu falbh mar bi sin a réir na barail a's fearr, chum a leas'.⁶⁵ Later in the same article he recommends that those who do not have a large, healthy family who are capable of work would be wiser to remain in Scotland since 'is fearr a bhi ann am bochduinn am measg a chàirdean agus a luchd-eòlais, gus am fas a' chlann suas, ma chaomhnar e gu sin fhaicinn, na e féin a thilgeadh lom ruisgte,

⁶³ 'New Zealand No. 1', *CG*, 1 (1840), 14.

⁶⁴ 'America mu Thuath: Canada Uachdarach', *CG*, 2 (1840), p. 31.

⁶⁵ *Clàr* 37, p. 518.

falamh, lag-chuiseach am measg nan aineolach, ann an duthaich chéin agus choimhich'.⁶⁶ Similarly, in his account of Prince Edward Island, he writes, 'ach na smuaineachadh neach sam bith gu 'm faighear an t-òr air na cladaichean an America - cha 'n fhaighear idir, ach is ann le saothair ghoirt, agus le obair chruaidh a thig teaghlach air an aghaidh 'san àite sin . . .'.⁶⁷

Another concern which MacGregor voices regarding emigration is for the spiritual welfare of those Gaels who choose to leave Scotland:

An gabh, uime sin, ni air bith deanamh chum an sluagh so a ta fàgail na dùcha, a bheannachadh le ministearibh agus maighstiribh-sgoile éudmhor agus dìleas, a theid maille riu agus a dh'fhanas maille riu ann an tìr nan coigreach! . . . Bhiodh e gu cinnteach 'na aobhar mulaid, nan teicheadh àireamh co mòr air falbh mar chaoraich o'n chrò - seadh mar chaoraich a' dol air seacharan gun bhuachaill, agus a dol gu bàs fa dheireadh anns na fàsaichibh falamh agus fiàdhaich!⁶⁸

A lack of preachers was an ongoing problem facing Highland emigrants. There were constant requests for more clergymen to follow their compatriots overseas. This was a particular problem in Canada's Maritime provinces in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Rev. John MacLennan of Belfast, Prince Edward Island, sent a plea home to Scotland on this very issue in 1840, attesting to the 'lamentable' spiritual destitution in the Island and pointing out that 'there are several thousands of our poor country-men scattered over its surface, perishing for lack of knowledge, without anyone caring for their souls'.⁶⁹ Ministers of the Established Church were not as readily inclined to emigrate as were those of other denominations, as has been demonstrated by Donald Meek in his study of the role of dissenting ministers in the emigration process.⁷⁰ Those outwith the Established Church did not have the stability of a manse and glebe to lose. Indeed, MacGregor himself, for all that he advocated emigration as a necessity, and also the need for ministers to emigrate, showed no inclination to forfeit this security.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 520.

⁶⁷ Clàr 29, p. 208.

⁶⁸ Clàr 5, p. 148.

⁶⁹ MacLennan, p. 51.

⁷⁰ Donald Meek, 'Aspects of the Role of Dissenting Evangelicalism in Highland Emigration', in *Proceedings of the First North American Congress of Celtic Studies*, ed. by Gordon MacLennan (Ottawa, 1988), pp. 15-35 (29).

Overall however, MacGregor's articles are concerned with promoting emigration to his readers. In a time of failing crops and the failure of fishing in the Highlands, his descriptions of Canada must have seemed appealing. Fertility, plenty and opportunity pervade the pages, for example 'tha Eilean Eoin 'na àit' anns am fàs gach pòr a ta feumail do 'n tuathanach, n 'is pailte agus le n' is lugha saothaireach na ann an àite sam bith do 'n eilean Bhreatunnach'.⁷¹ In his description of Richmond Bay in the same island he writes 'cha robh eathraichean-iasgaiche riamh ni bu lionmhoire air Loch Fine, na chithear iad aig *Fishery Cove* anns an loch so'.⁷² Of Cape Breton we are told 'tha gach iasg-sligneach is eile, pailt cheithir-thimchioll an eilein, agus anns na h-aimhnichibh, agus na lochan uisge agus mara air feadh an eilein'.⁷³ He suggests the continuity of community on the other side of the Atlantic with the familiar picture of 'daoine a' dol ann an càirdeas do thighibh a chéile, agus a' suidhe gu seasgar mu 'n teine sgairteil a' labhairt mu na h-amannaibh a dh-fhalbh'.⁷⁴

As an additional incentive to emigrate MacGregor looked to the possible long-term advantages of emigration for Gaels. In both 'Mu Thimchioll Imirich nan Gaidheal do dh'America' in 1840 and his writings about Prince Edward Island eight years later he appeals to Gaels' foresight in making a move which will benefit not only themselves, but also their descendants, offering the image of 'seann Albainn air tuiteam gu neoni'.⁷⁵ He does not see this potential decline as being limited to Scotland:

Feumar a chuimhneachadh gu'n robh rìoghachdan agus cumhachdan, a dh-aindeoin am mèud, am maise, agus am mòrachd, ag éiridh agus a' tuiteam anns gach linn o'n chruthachadh a nuas gu ruig an là an diugh! Chaidh iad sin seachad cosmhail ri sgiamh an t-saoghail; agus cha'n 'eil aobhar a bhi 'am beachd nach lean an rìoghachd Bhreatunnach uair éigin air slighe chàich. Feudaiddh an t-àm teachd anns am faic i a neart agus a greadhnachas air tuiteam gu làr; agus a solus a ta an diugh co dealrach, air thionndadh gu dorchadas.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Clàr 29, p. 206. 'An t-eilean Breatunnach' should be taken to mean Britain, not Cape Breton. He refers to Britain in this way again in Clàr 37, p. 517.

⁷² Ibid., p. 179.

⁷³ Clàr 30, p. 237.

⁷⁴ Clàr 29, p. 205.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 207.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Not only does this indicate the extent to which MacGregor saw the Gaels as being fully assimilated into the British Empire, but it presents an interesting point of view given the strength of imperial ideology in the nineteenth century, albeit waning slightly at this point. Certainly archaeological excavations taking place in the Near East at this time were heightening awareness among the general populus of the sequential rise and fall of different cultures, stretching back in history beyond Ancient Greece and Rome. Victorians were thus able to see themselves and the great British Empire as one in a series of transitory civilisations, and the stream of emigration to North America was reinforced by the notion that civilisation was moving westwards.⁷⁷ Presumably MacGregor believed that this would be of some comfort to emigrants, helping them to believe that they were making the right decision. This argument virtually contradicts a point which he makes in 'Comhairlean do luchd-imirich 'dh'ionnsuidh America' a year later. Here he draws upon the security which the British Empire offered emigrants, since its rule extended to Canada and other colonial destinations. In contrast to his theory of Britain's possible decline, and therefore the emigrants' good fortune to be leaving, he observes that emigrants were hardly leaving Britain, thus assuring the reader of some stability:

Is farsuing da rìreadh uachdranachd Bhreatuinn . . . Tha iad gun teagamh a' fàgail Bhreatuinn, ach tha iad fhathast air an dìonadh agus air an stiùireadh le laghannaibh Bhreatuinn. Ged a dh'fhàg iad ann an seadh an rioghachd, tha iad fhathast fo ughdarras na Ban-rìghinn Bhreatuinn.⁷⁸

MacGregor's apparent inconsistency between essays can be attributed to his using whichever argument suits his purpose in making emigration seem a less frightening prospect, and a more appealing one. It may also be the case that MacGregor's own single-mindedness in promoting emigration blinded him to this inconsistency. It should also be borne in mind that these inconsistencies are between articles rather than within any one article, and may represent a change in attitude on his part.

1873-1881

⁷⁷ Richard D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas* (London, 1973), pp. 110-11.

⁷⁸ Clàr 37, p. 517.

This final period in MacGregor's writing shows a continuing interest in the social welfare of the Gaels. The period between 1848 and 1873, during which the lack of Gaelic periodicals reduced MacGregor's written output of articles virtually to nothing, saw emigration from the Highlands and Islands reach its peak and then decline, and it witnessed what James Hunter has described as a period of 'unprecedented stability' in the 1860s and 1870s.⁷⁹ The 1870s was a period of raised expectations for the Gaels, and of increasing confidence in their own value and rights. This is reflected in Alexander MacGregor's writings from this period, as we find him more willing to criticise landlords' actions than he had been thirty years earlier. Doubtless this was due in part to his being located in Inverness rather than a rural location, where he might incur the displeasure of a local landlord. In Inverness he was also exposed to a different intellectual environment from that of Skye and which was more critical of social injustice, including as it did men like John Murdoch and Alexander MacKenzie. MacGregor was in fact a regular contributor to Murdoch's radical *Highlander* which campaigned tirelessly on behalf of the Highland crofters. Some of MacGregor's criticism appeared in English in the *Celtic Magazine*. In this he states openly that 'the chief cause of the evils complained of mainly arises from mismanagement of proprietors or landowners' and refers to the 'cruel, unpatriotic, unchristian' manner in which proprietors turned land over to sheep farming.⁸⁰

More commonly, however, his criticisms found expression in Gaelic, and more specifically in his Gaelic prose dialogues. The dialogue allowed the writer to distance himself from the opinions which his characters expressed, and to explore issues in fictional settings. So we find Alexander MacGregor using the dialogue to highlight the increasingly common problem in the Highlands during the 1870s of estates being turned over to sport. His two characters Murachadh Ban and Coinneach Ciobair discuss Coinneach's landlord, Sir Seumas.

Mur.- Ach ciod a thainig eadar e fein agus na tuathanaich choir aig an robh na bailte sin, moran diubh o'n rugadh iad, agus an sinseara rompa?

⁷⁹ Hunter, p. 107.

⁸⁰ Clàr 232, p. 441.

Coin.- Thainig eatorra na feidh, na h-earbaichean, na maighichean, na coineannan, na cearcan-fraoich, na coilich-dhubha, na h-eoin-ruadha, agus an leithidibh sin, - creutairean a ta 'deanamh millidh agus sgrios gun choimeas air gach pòrr agus barr; agus cha toir an t-uachdaran taing do'n tuath air son na calldach. An aite sin lasaidh e am feirg ma labhrar lide gu'n d'rinn iad dolaidh sam bith air toradh na talmhainn. Ach cha'n e sin a-mhàin, ach theid coisridh mhor a mach le'n eachaibh agus le'n cuid chon, agus bheir iad steud asda am measg nan raointean arbhair agus gach barraidh eile, 'g an saltairt fo'n cosaibh, agus 'g am milleadh. Ach an uair a nithear gearan ri Sir Seumas, is ann a thogas e a shroin co ard ri crann soithiche, a chionn gu'm bheil a dhanadas aig na tuathanaich bhochd fiu aon fhocal gearain a dheanamh.⁸¹

On the same topic, 'Comhradh eadar am Maighstir-Sgoile agus Callum a' Ghlinne', published in the *Highlander* in 1874, has Callum complaining about the damage which deer and game-birds are doing to his crops. He has resolved to write to the *Highlander* on this very subject and shows the schoolmaster his letter in which he writes first of a change in landlord and then of the resulting problems:

Ach dh'fhalbh mo dheagh Mhaighstir a bha 'na uachdaran co teo-chridheach, truacanta 'sa chuir riamh cas air lar. Dh'fhalbh e, mo leoin, agus thainig a mhac 'na aite, - Tha mise air mo chreachadh, - tha na ficheadan eile air an creachadh leis gach por agus barr a bhuineas doibh a bhi air am milleadh; agus chan' fheudar guth gearain a thogail. Tha gach earb, eilid, agus damh crochdach, co eolach a nis air an saorsa fein 's gun tig iad, agus gu'n toir iad am bad ach beag as mo laimh.⁸²

Not only is MacGregor highlighting a topical issue, but is demonstrating to readers that they too can use the press to air their grievances. Elsewhere he uses Coinneach's landlord, Sir Seumas, to represent those landlords who abused their privileges as Highland landowners, particularly with regard to transforming their land into sporting estates. In the dialogue already quoted between Murachadh Ban and Coinneach Ciobair, the conversation moves on to the need for legislative reform to protect tenants rights,

Mur.- . . . Ach aig a' cheart am so tha gleadhar mor air feadh na rìoghachd a thaobh laghanna ura a bhi air an dealbhadh air son na seilge, agus cha 'n 'eil teagamh agam-sa olc air mhaith leis na tighearnaibh-fearainn, nach deanar riaghailtean agus reachdan araidh, chum coir a chumail ris an tuath, agus chum gnothaichean na seilge a shuidheachadh air steidh uir agus chinntich.

Coin.- Tha sin uile fìor ach an deigh sin, cìod a dh'eireas do'n tuath ma thilgear

⁸¹ Clàr 76, p. 15.

⁸² Clàr 146, p. 3.

a mach iad, mar tha Sir Seumas a' deanamh, agus mar a ni iomadh Sir Seumas agus Sir Uilleam eile ag radh gur leo fein am fearann, agus gu'm feud iad an toil fein a dheanamh leis?⁸³

In the same vein is another of his dialogues from 1874. Murachadh happens upon Coinneach who is digging a deep hole. It emerges that this is the 'brain-wave' of his landlord, Sir Seumas, as Coinneach explains.

Bhruadair e air oidhche araidh gu 'n robh am fearann aige lan guail agus nach robh an gual ach beagan shlat sìos o bharr na talmhainn, anns a' cheart aite far am bheil mi a' cladhach. Uime sin dh' orduich e dhomh-sa cumadh an tuill a ghearradh a mach, agus a bhi ' criomadh ris mar a dh'fheudas mi, gus an cuir e comunn laidir gu 'oibreachadh air an ath sheachdain . . .⁸⁴

It may be no more than a happy coincidence that another Sir Seumas - Sir James Matheson, proprietor of the Island of Lewis - had been in the news earlier in the year when Bernera crofters had protested against evictions and caused estate management to back down. As a result of this incident Sir James Matheson's chamberlain, the infamous Donald Munro, lost his job.⁸⁵ What the dialogue does do, in a humorous way, is to symbolise the extent to which the Highlands were being exploited under the laissez-faire economic system of the nineteenth century. The century had seen many Highland landlords changing the use they made of their estates in pursuit of profit, whether it be through sheep farming, kelp production, or latterly by turning parts of estates over to game to cater for the wealthy tourist. The behaviour of Coinneach's landlord was merely indicative of the attitude of estate owners - namely, to maximise the financial profit generated by their land. Coinneach goes on to relate that Sir Seumas has taken the land from his 'tenants', implying the right of the Gaels to the land, and has himself taken charge of it. The results demonstrate his error. We are told that he has brought livestock across from Ireland, but: 'Cha do fhreagair an spreidh Eireannach 's an tìr so idir. Chaidh na h-uiread de na h-eich a dhith air, agus iadsan nach deachaidh, dh'fhas iad co caol, cruaidh ri bualas na poite. Chaill an crodh na laoigh, shearg na caoraich as leis a' ghalar-greidhe, agus cha'n 'eil ach mi-shealbh

⁸³ Clàr 76, p. 16

⁸⁴ Clàr 85, p. 208. In his *History of Skye*, p. 397, Alexander Nicolson refers to Lord MacDonald embarking upon exploratory coal mining in Skye, a project which failed to prove profitable. Nicolson gives no dates for this, but it would seem to have been early in the nineteenth century.

⁸⁵ James Shaw Grant, *A Shilling for your Scowl* (Stornoway, 1992). This book provides one of the most detailed accounts available of Donald Munro and his activities, including the Bernera Riot.

air gach ni o'n la dheistinneach sin air an d'thainig eadar e fein agus na tuathanaich cheanalta a bha 'g àiteachadh an fhuinn aige'.⁸⁶ The irony here is that the traditional Gaelic ideology that without the rightful king/chief in place, the land will not flourish, applies equally well to the tenants, whose absence is reflected in the land's failure to prosper.

It was not only to criticise what he saw as abuse of power that MacGregor used the dialogue, but as an example of how landlords should be conducting the management of their Highland estates. By 1877, Sir Seumas, the villain of MacGregor's dialogues in 1874, has in fact seen the error of his ways. He has employed men to clear, drain and plough his land and when finished it is to be given to his tenantry, for whom he is also building proper houses. Coinneach comments, in marked contrast to his words of three years earlier,

Uachdaran ni's fearr cha do sheas riamh a 'm broig. Cha 'n 'eil mallachdan nan daoine bochda 'na dheigh mar an deigh nan Uachdaran ain-iochdmhor a tha saruchadh nan creutairean truagh sin a tha fodhpa, 'gan greasadh gu criochaibh cumhann, agus 'gan claidh le bochduinn, a' cur an fhearainn a dh'araich iomadh cuiridh calma agus treun fo na feidh agus na caoraich bhana.

and Murachadh agrees, 'n 'an deanadh gach Uachdaran 'sa Ghaidhealtachd mar a tha Sir Seumas a' deanamh, bhiodh pailteas gach bliadhna 'san tir air son gach duine agus ainmhich'.⁸⁷

This demonstrates MacGregor using his dialogues to lead by example, showing a 'converted' landlord. Given that most of those whom MacGregor would wish to follow this example would probably have been unable to read his Gaelic dialogues, he was effectively preaching what many Gaels already believed, the main effect being to increase their conviction in their own cause. Nonetheless, this does show MacGregor as willing to offer criticism, albeit in dialogue form and with the added anonymity of a pen-name. The anonymity does however negate the authority his words would have carried had they been known to be those of an Established minister. On the other hand perhaps many of his readers knew who 'Alasdair Ruadh' was.

⁸⁶ Clàr 85, p. 208.

⁸⁷ Clàr 122, p. 200.

In conclusion, one must ask to what extent his position between landlord and tenants provided MacGregor with a dilemma? Is there any sense in his writing that he felt frustrated by this situation? And as regards the critics of the clergy, nineteenth century and present day, what action could he have taken which he did not take? He performed this balancing act between estate and tenants by seeking assistance for his parishioners in Kilmuir through those official channels open to him, specifically the Home Secretary and the Central Board of Relief, and by publicising the plight of the Highlands through his writings in English. He was not silent on the subject of famine, yet, equally importantly, he ventured nothing in his writing which would upset the status quo. At no point did he suggest, for instance, that Lord MacDonald might make more land available to his tenants, nor did he criticise him for his known extravagance. Moreover, he would clearly have given no support to any form of rebellion against landlords. What comes across in his writing is a fear of the type of revolution witnessed in France,

Mar biodh na laghanna so idir ann, cia mar bhiodh a' chùis? Cha'n fhaicte ach rèubainn, sgrios, agus bàs anns gach baile agus dùthaich! Faicibh na Frangaich aig a' cheart àm so, a thilg an rìgh agus an reachdan air cùl, agus ciod a dh'èirich dhoibh? Ciod ach sgrios agus aimhreit, mort agus marbhadh gach là . .

⁸⁸

It was not only respect for the law and deference to the upper classes therefore which coloured his view of the famine, but a sense of vulnerability in the face of potential revolution.

Social criticism, which had been a feature of the Scottish Church in the wake of the Reformation, had declined from the beginning of the eighteenth century as the emphasis moved from social to personal reformation.⁸⁹ By the middle of the nineteenth century, this tradition of criticism was all but forgotten by the Church, which did not see social criticism as falling within its jurisdiction. For an individual minister such as MacGregor to have embarked upon overt criticism of the ruling classes would have been a step which would have required a strength of conviction and of character which most ministers did not possess, MacGregor included. What is

⁸⁸ Clàr 37, pp. 517-18.

⁸⁹ Smith, pp. 18-25.

evident is that MacGregor had found what to him would have seemed a natural role for himself, as an intermediary between estate management and tenants, reminiscent of the function performed by the tacksmen who had emigrated in the eighteenth century. By using his skills as a literate member of the community, he wrote letters and articles which highlighted the plight of his parishioners. Even in the 1870s when he is more outspoken in his criticism, there is nothing to suggest that he felt he had in any way failed the people of Kilmuir during his ministry there.

It is important to bear in mind the amount of suffering to which ministers like MacGregor were eye-witnesses and the extent to which this must have affected them. His enthusiasm for emigration, which he promoted through the medium of Gaelic, was motivated by a genuine concern for the welfare of Gaels, and this is proven by his cautionary words regarding emigration. In the light of the activities of MacGregor during the periods of famine in the 1830s and 1840s, it becomes evident how grossly unfair some of the generalisations made about the clergy in this period can be, as for example James Hunter's blatant exaggeration,

On their side the Evangelicals had many advantages. They were the only ministers for whom crofters felt any respect or affection and they were consequently able to draw on a fund of popularity built up over many years . . . The Moderates had no such advantage. For them there was only deeply felt animosity.⁹⁰

There is no denying that some moderate ministers were unpopular, but there are no adverse comments to be found about MacGregor, or his father, in any published accounts. Indeed, some 500 Kilmuir parishioners signed MacGregor's call to that parish in 1844, which is hardly indicative of widespread animosity.⁹¹

What makes MacGregor a particularly interesting figure is that his writings strongly reflect the general change in expectations between the two periods in which he was writing: the 1840s characterised by famine, emigration and acceptance of the Gaels' situation; and the 1870s when crofters' expectations were higher and they were becoming increasingly confident, attracting the support of a number of prominent figures such as Charles Fraser Mackintosh and Professor John Stuart Blackie. By the

⁹⁰ Hunter, p. 103.

⁹¹ Clàr 272.

1870s, there were one or two ministers who championed the crofters' cause, particularly the Rev. Donald MacCallum, his brother Malcolm and the Rev. Angus MacIver. Alexander MacGregor cannot be placed amongst this more radical breed of preacher, nor can he be classed with those who steadfastly refused to involve themselves in any form of social criticism.

MacGregor was no longer a young man in the 1870s. He was sixty-seven when his first dialogue was published in *An Gaidheal* in 1873. He in fact died just as the Land Agitation was gaining momentum in the early 1880s. His last speech to the Gaelic Society of Inverness testifies to his relatively new found conviction of the importance of social criticism, when he states, 'And if in no other way, we can at least do it by directing public attention to it by reprobating in the strongest way we can, by exposing to public contempt if we can, any person who in an arbitrary or tyrannical manner tries to turn the Highlanders out of their holdings'.⁹²

⁹² Clàr 219, p. 11.

CHAPTER 6

SLAVERY

As the previous chapter has demonstrated, Alexander MacGregor's writing dealt with famine, clearance and emigration in the Highlands. Much of this writing was only published when the worst of the problems which he discussed had passed. Slavery was another social issue which attracted his attention, but he was separated from it not by time but by distance. It is striking that he was writing publicly on the need to abolish slavery at the time of the mid-nineteenth century Highland famines and Clearances, the appalling effects of which he himself witnessed first hand. This chapter will consider the insight which MacGregor's writing on slavery offers into his perceptions of contemporary social problems closer to home.

'Gearr Chunntas mu Thraillealachd, no Daorsa ann an Caochladh Linnean agus Chearnan d'en t-saoghal' was a two-part essay contributed by MacGregor to *Fear-Tathaich nam Beann* in 1849.¹ This represented the first discussion of slavery of any length to appear in print in Gaelic. Two short pieces on slavery had appeared in early issues of *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, but both gave only the most superficial coverage of the topic.² Both pieces were anonymous, and may have been penned by the journal's editor, Norman MacLeod, who, in common with MacGregor, contributed articles anonymously to his publications, although this authorship cannot be confirmed without a detailed study of MacLeod's style, which is outwith the remit of this thesis. The longer of these pieces was two pages in length. MacGregor's essay numbered twenty-one pages over the two parts.

Parallels had been observed before the 1840s between specific incidents in the Highlands and slavery, at times even suggesting that the suffering of the Gaels was worse than that of slaves. This parallel seems to have been expressed, almost without exception, in the English language. Writing in 1822, Major-General David Stewart of Garth observed,

The cruelty of removing the slaves on one West India estate to another, perhaps scarcely five miles distant, is frequently reprobated in the strongest terms, and

¹ Clàr 38 & 40.

² 'Trailleachd agus Daorsa Dhaoine Dubha ann an America', *CG*, 4 (1840), 93-95; 'Malairt nan Daoine Dubha o Rìoghachd Africa', *CG*, 6 (1840), 133-34.

attempts are made to procure Acts of Parliament to prevent the removal of a slave from his usual residence; yet the ejection or emigration of the Highlanders, their total ruin and banishment from their native land, is viewed with apathy, and their feelings of despair deemed unworthy of notice.³

Almost a century earlier, in 1739, MacLeod of Berneray and MacDonald of Sleat were discovered to be involved in the transportation of innocent clansmen to America for sale into slavery. The *William* anchored off Skye and Harris and 'the wretched people, about 40 men, 30 women, the remainder children of from five years upwards "under cloud of night" were dragged down to the shore and forcibly put on board'.⁴ Those who had been abducted were told that they were to be sold in America. The pretext for their removal was that they were criminals, yet none had been tried for any crime or sentenced to transportation. Sorley MacLean cites a traditional reference to the incident and himself refers to this slave ship, 'Long nan Daoine', in his poem *Gaoir na h-Eòrpa*.⁵

Although this is probably the most extreme example of Gaels' ill-treatment at the hands of their chiefs, throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, circumstances remained such that similar abuse could, and did, continue. Conditions on emigrant ships, at least before the Passenger Vessels Act of 1803, seem to have been little better, if at all, than on slave ships. K. A. Walpole tells that one ship sailing to North Carolina in 1773 was 'carrying 450 passengers, 450 men, women and children herded into a space between decks that cannot have been much larger than 60 ft x 18 ft x 6 ft, an average of just over two square feet each'.⁶ She then proceeds to draw attention to two vessels anchored at Fort William in 1801, by which time measures had been taken to limit the number of slaves on board a ship in proportion to the tonnage of the vessel. Emigrant ships, however, were not subject to such limitations and where these two ships, the *Sarah* and the *Dove*, would only have been

³ Major-General David Stewart of Garth, *Sketches of the Character, Institutions and Customs of the Highlanders of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1882, 2 vols; new one vol. edition Inverness, 1885), p. 182.

⁴ Isabel F. Grant, *The MacLeods: The History of a Clan 1200-1956* (London, 1959), p. 406.

⁵ Sorley MacLean, 'The Poetry of the Clearances', in *Ris a' Bhruthaich* ed. by William Gillies (Stornoway, 1985), pp. 48-74 (51). Somhairle MacGill-eain, *O Choille gu Bearradh: From Wood to Ridge* (Manchester, 1991), p. 8.

⁶ K. A. Walpole, 'The Humanitarian Movement of the Early Nineteenth Century to Remedy Abuses of Emigrant Vessels to America', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fourth Series, 14 (1931), 197-224 (p. 199).

allowed to carry 489 slaves between them, they carried 700 emigrants. 14% of the *Sarah's* passengers died en route to Pictou. In the wake of the repeal of the Passenger Act in 1826, the Colonial Office received reports on the treatment of emigrants on ships bound for North America. One such report stated 'that there are not many instances of slave traders from Africa to America exhibiting so disgusting a picture', and this from a man who had once commanded a frigate which had captured a slave ship.⁷ Although improvements in conditions for Highland emigrants had been brought about by the time that MacGregor wrote his essays, the memory of such maltreatment would not have disappeared, that is of course assuming that accounts of these emigrants' experiences had reached those left behind.

Another contemporary example of a parallel being drawn between the treatment of Gaels and slaves is to be found, again, in Major-General David Stewart's writing. He alluded to the agents of the 'white slave trade' who 'induce many unfortunate creatures to emigrate to America, and to sell the reversion of their persons and labour for the passage which they cannot obtain otherwise'.⁸ This provides confirmation that this practice was still prevalent well into the nineteenth century, as it had been in the preceding one.⁹ Ian Adams and Meredyth Somerville, in their study of emigration from Scotland to America, draw attention to this side of emigration, providing numerous examples of emigrants who indentured themselves in order to cover the cost of their passage to America. They claim that in North America, at least in the first half of the eighteenth century, the English perceived the Scots as being little better than 'white negroes'. Since slaves were property for life they tended to be better treated than those who were indentured only for a number of years.¹⁰ This practice continued throughout the eighteenth and into the following century. One account from 1775 tells of men from the Northern Isles who had

⁷ Ibid., pp. 200-05.

⁸ Stewart, p. 171.

⁹ Contemporary accounts indicate that emigrants from the British Isles were not the only ones to whom this happened. Isaac Weld Jr. in *Travels Through North America and the Provinces of Canada 1795-1797 Vol. I* (New York, 1970), pp. 120-21, tells of Dutch and Germans living in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, who had been enticed to leave their native lands with a free passage, but who were then sold when their ship reached America.

¹⁰ Ian Adams and Meredyth Somerville, *Cargoes of Despair and Hope: Scottish Emigration to North America 1603-1803* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 4.

indentured themselves to the ship's captain for four years. On arriving in Virginia the ship was boarded by men 'who make it their business to go on board all ships who have in [them] either servants or convicts and buy sometimes the whole and sometimes a parcell of them as they can agree, and then they drive them through the country like a parcell of sheep untill they can sell them to advantage'.¹¹

Probably the best known parallel drawn between the Gaels and slaves, which attracted much publicity, surfaced less than five years after MacGregor's essays appeared in print. This controversy arose as a result of a visit by anti-slavery campaigner, Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe, to Britain in 1853 and her publication the next year of *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands*. In that volume she concluded that the clearances on the estates of her friend the Duchess of Sutherland 'were an almost sublime instance of the benevolent employment of superior wealth and power in shortening the struggles of civilisation, and elevating in a few years a whole community to a point of education and material prosperity, which unassisted, they might never have obtained'.¹² This provoked the exiled Sutherland critic, Donald MacLeod, to reply with his own *Gloomy Memories* in which he openly condemned such apparent double standards from one who opposed slavery. 'Slavery is damnable, and is the most disgusting word in the English or any other language', he pronounced, but 'there is not the least shadow of hope that ever the British aristocracy will think shame, or give up *their* system of slavery'.¹³ Slavery provided MacLeod with an emotive frame of reference in which to describe Gaels' treatment at the hands of unscrupulous landlords as, for instance, when in 1851 he wrote of the agents of Colonel Gordon in South Uist and Barra,

The duplicity and art which was used by them in order to entrap the unwary natives, is worthy of the craft and cunning of an old slave-trader [...] were you to see the racing and chasing of policemen, constables, and ground-officers, pursuing the outlawed natives, you would think, only for their colour, that you had been, by some miracle, transported to the banks of the Gambia, on the slave coast of Africa.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid., p. 199.

¹² Alexander MacKenzie, *History of the Highland Clearances* (repr. Edinburgh, 1991), p. 119.

¹³ Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 255-56.

The issue of slavery was thus of some significance to the Gaels and it offered critics of Highland landlords an alternative frame of reference against which to place the social problems of the Highlands in order to magnify their moral implications. There is, of course, the other side of the coin, to which MacGregor makes reference in the concluding part of his essay, namely the Gael as slave owner. He states: 'Tha mòran de na Gaedheil nan sealbhadairean thràillean 'an America'.¹⁵ Other evidence confirms this, such as the fact that many negroes were Gaelic speaking, having learnt the language from their masters. The Rev. John C. Sinclair, in a letter published in *An Gaidheal* in 1872 concerning the Highlanders of North Carolina, states, 'I have met with a number of coloured people who speak the Gaelic as if they had been raised in any of the Hebrides'.¹⁶ The prevalence of Mac- names among West Indian blacks down to the present day provides further corroboration of this.¹⁷

The Abolition Movement

Chronologically, MacGregor's essays were published at the end of the era of popular abolitionism in Britain. By 1849 eleven years had passed since legislation had finally abolished slavery within the British dominions. Acts of 1807 and 1811 legislated against the British slave trade, and those of 1833 and 1838 against slavery itself. The British abolition movement had emerged in the later eighteenth century and remained near the forefront of the British public and politicians' attention during the first four decades of the next century, particularly after the 1820s. This humanitarian movement, which achieved its goal of the emancipation of slaves in Britain's colonies, had a clear historical role as a pioneer among social reform movements.¹⁸ It is in these terms that MacGregor's essays must be considered, as a means of heightening awareness of social injustice.

Slavery proved to be an issue central to church politics in the wake of the Disruption. C. Duncan Rice, author of *The Scots Abolitionists 1833-1861*, has

¹⁵ Clàr 40, p. 575.

¹⁶ *An G.*, 4 (1872), 97-98 (p. 97).

¹⁷ See Charles W. Dunn's *Highland Settler* (Toronto, 1953), p. 138 which tells of Negro servants in North Carolina speaking Gaelic. See also James Hunter *Glencoe and the Indians* (Edinburgh, 1996).

¹⁸ Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (Basingstoke, 1986), p. 164.

observed that by the 1840s, American antislavery 'had become an integral part of the polemical life of the Scottish churches'.¹⁹ Its prominence stemmed from financial support received by the new and impecunious Free Church. A high proportion of the \$3000 collected in the American South came from the slave states, implying that there were many pro-slavery Scots in the Southern States.²⁰ This provided both Established Church and voluntaries with a weapon against the Free Church which led to a 'Send Back the Money Campaign'. Apparent support for slavery at a time when the abolition movement was still very strong could be used to discredit those involved. Thus the issue of American slavery was effectively hijacked by those embroiled in Scottish religious politics in the 1840s, with the ulterior motive of fuelling existing disputes within the Scottish church.²¹ Consequently, it is interesting that Alexander MacGregor makes no mention of any such debate. This might seem somewhat surprising given the high profile which this dispute had, and the fact that MacGregor could so easily have at least alluded to the Free Church's apparent condoning of slavery. That he fails to make any mention of the church debate is in itself interesting and is indicative of his motives lying elsewhere. The fact that MacGregor did not take up this opportunity to criticise the Free Church also lends weight to the statement made in one obituary that MacGregor 'lived in charity with all men'.²²

One view of the abolition movement is that it diverted attention from social problems closer to home, and thus was conservative in its impetus.²³ MacGregor's essays, coming from the pen of an Establishment minister at a time of immense social problems in the Highlands, might then be construed as diverting tactics given the inherent conservatism of the Establishment. It has, however, been demonstrated by Seymour Drescher that the abolition movement actually had the opposite effect with 'the intimate cross-fertilisation of antislavery and factory agitation' in the 1820s

¹⁹ C. Duncan Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists 1833-1861* (Louisiana, 1981), p. 120.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 126.

²¹ Ibid., p. 146.

²² 'Death and Funeral of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor', *Northern Chronicle*, 26 October 1881.

²³ Seymour Drescher, 'Cart Whip and Billy Roller: AntiSlavery and Reform Symbolism in Industrializing Britain', *Journal of Social History*, 15 No. 1 (1981), 3-24 (p. 3).

and 1830s.²⁴ Rather than distracting attention from factory conditions at home the abolition movement provided domestic agitators with a standard against which conditions at home might be compared, and with a framework and code of reference within which to express their arguments. The remainder of this chapter will attempt to establish the motivation behind MacGregor's essay on slavery through a consideration of his treatment of the subject. A key factor to bear in mind throughout is that the publication of MacGregor's 'Gearr Chunntas mu Thraillealachd . . .' coincided with a period of famine and mass emigration in the Highlands, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Slavery in MacGregor's Writing

The first part of 'Gearr Chunntas mu Thraillealachd . . .' presents a very broad historical perspective on slavery from Biblical times, Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, to the final emancipation of slaves in the British Empire in 1838. The second part is more focused, considering slavery in America where the economy of the Southern States was still slave-based. Bringing to readers' attention atrocities outwith the realms of their experience, the account must have made shockingly gripping reading then as it does even today. The essay's power to shock and arouse pity is not due entirely to the subject matter itself, but owes much to MacGregor's style. With the awareness of his audience which is essential to a minister, MacGregor consciously exploits images and comparisons which bring slavery closer to the Gaels' own range of experience. This is one of the outstanding characteristics of his writing, occurring for instance in his essays on astronomy, where he was clearly aware of the need to explain alien concepts in more familiar form. His simplification of slaves' conditions, into terms with which Gaels could identify and comprehend, demonstrated an ability to satisfy his audience's needs. Slaves in Ancient Greece, he explained, were branded 'direach mar a nithear air na caoirich 's an fhanng'.²⁵ In mid-nineteenth century America they were 'air an reic, air an sgaradh o chéile mar

²⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁵ Clàr 38, p. 536.

bhrùidean na machrach!'²⁶ The comparison of slaves with the sheep and cattle of the Gaels is one of MacGregor's favourite images in this essay. In America, states like Virginia which raised slaves for states further north were likened to the Gaels who raised black cattle for English drovers.

Past practices in the Highlands provided MacGregor with another means of illustrating the persecution of slaves. If a slave escaped, he wrote, 'tha gu bicheanta coin-luirg air an cur 'nan déigh, coltach ris mar a bhatar a deanamh air cuid de na fineachan Gàedhalach sin a bha air an cur an taobh-mach-de-lagh 's an t-seann aimsir.'²⁷ Indeed such occurrences were not confined to the Highlands' past. The Napier Commission, set up in 1883 to enquire into crofting conditions, heard evidence from John Mackay, a crofter from Kilphedar in South Uist, relating to injustices suffered by crofters there during the preceding forty years,

I saw a policeman chasing a man down the macher [sic] towards Askernish, with a view to catch him, in order to send him on board an emigrant ship lying in Loch Boisdale. I saw a man who lay down on his face and nose on a little island, hiding himself from the policeman, and the policeman getting a dog to search for this missing man in order to get him on board the emigrant ship.²⁸

There were other aspects of the Highlands' past in which he found analogies with contemporary America, namely between the attitude of slave owners and of one nameless old Highland chief who was reported to have said,

Cha chuntainn e mar shaorsa gu'm biodh comas agam deanamh rium féin mar a b'àill leam; ach chuntainn e mar shaorsa gu'm feudain deanamh ri muinntir eile mar a chithinn iomchuidh mar an ceudna!²⁹

This is an interesting perspective which gives what many would consider a distorted view of the clan system. In addition to placing clan chiefs on a par with slave owners, albeit by implication, the writer has reversed the common interpretation of freedom, so that it relates not to what one is able to do, but to what one does to others. The traditional perception of a clan chief was first and foremost

²⁶ Clàr 40, p. 571.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ *Report of her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the conditions of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, PP (1884), XXXIII, p. 707. See also John Lorne Campbell, *Tales of the Cuddy* (Edinburgh, 1959), pp. 91-94.

²⁹ Ibid., p 570.

of a hero figure whose paternal and noble qualities placed him far above those who perpetrated the atrocities of slavery. Reality was far removed from this, as the incident of MacLeod of Berneray, and MacDonald of Sleat's efforts to sell clansmen into slavery demonstrates. This was especially true of the commercialised times in which MacGregor was writing. The portrayal of the Highland chieftain is in line with MacGregor's view of the Highlands' past as expressed in historical tales. Where on the one hand he clearly had a great interest in Highland history he constantly reiterated how fortunate Gaels were to live in more law-abiding times in which people knew the Word of God.³⁰ In the second part of 'Gearr Chunntas mu Thraillealachd. . .' he made clearer the parallel which he saw between earlier Highland society and that of countries which still practised slavery, observing, 'Cha 'n 'eil an t-àm fad air ais anns am feudadh cinn-chinnidh na Gàidhealtachd leum air cheann a dheanamh orrasan a choisneadh an diomb agus cha robh neach ann aig an robh a chridhe 'ràdh riu " 'S olc a tha sibh a' deanamh'".³¹ So Alexander MacGregor consistently reinforces how fortunate Gaels were to live when and where they did, reflecting the Victorians' sense of the moral and intellectual superiority of their age.

It is not only the past, however, which provides MacGregor with analogies. He also highlighted parallels with the contemporary Highland situation, although by more subtle means. One of the most destructive effects of the slave trade was its desecration of 'community'. Drescher has commented upon the slave trade's destruction of human networks as 'people were uprooted from their lands and sent among strangers as strangers even to one another'.³² MacGregor, too, identified this blight on community when he focused on the experience related by one African slave,

Tha gràdh aig gach aon d'a dhùthaich féin: an t-àite 's am b'àbhaist da féin 's d'a chàirdean coinneachadh cha dì-chuimhnich e gu bràth. Rinn Dia a' chuid sin de 'n dùthaich do 'm buininn-se da rìreadh àillidh; 's an ioghnadh ged a tha mo ghràdh dh'i fathasd gun chaochladh? O! tha, 's bithidh gus an taisgear mi 's an ùir.³³

³⁰ See for instance Clàr 34.

³¹ Clàr 40, p. 575.

³² Drescher (1986), pp. 163-64.

³³ Clàr 38, p. 539.

The similarity to the situation of so many Gaels in the 1840s - albeit in less horrific circumstances - could hardly have escaped MacGregor's readers. The sentiment voiced above echoes the Highland emigrant experience. The *cianalas* or homesickness expressed here would not seem out of place had it come from an exiled Gael. Thus MacGregor immediately established a sense of fellowship through at least one element of shared experience between Gaelic reader and slave. Once established, he strengthened this bond which allowed his readers to empathise with the African's account. The African slave described the forced parting of one couple who had been sold to different masters,

O! an t-suil, agus an glaoth muladach a thug esan 'nuair a ghabh e'n sealladh mu dheireadh oirre-se 'bha dha mar chnàmh de chnàimh 's mar fheòil de 'fheòil, agus air a' chaileig bhòidhich a bha air a leagadh comhla r'a màthair, mar a bha iad gan taruing a stigh do 'n bhàta 's an robh mise, cha dichuimhnich mi fhad 's is maireann mi - b'èiginn domh mo cheann a chromadh - cha b'urrainn domh amharc orra.³⁴

This painful shipboard parting is strongly reminiscent of one of the best known pieces of Gaelic prose-writing from the nineteenth century, Caraid nan Gaidheal's 'Long Mhór nan Eilthireach' first published in *An Teachdaire Gaelach*. The pathos of the account which MacGregor related clearly had its precedent in Gaelic prose as the following extracts demonstrate,

Bha iad an so eadar bheag agus mhór, o'n naoidhean a bha seachduin a dh'aois agus an seann duine liath a bha trì fichead bliadhna 's a deich. Bu déisteannach ri 'fhaicinn an trom mhulad - an iarguin inntinn - an imcheist, am bristeadh-cridhe a bha air an deargadh gu domhain air aghaidh na cuid a bu mhò dhiubh, a bha 'n seo cruinn o iomadh eilean agus earrann de 'n Ghàidhealtachd.³⁵

MacLeod's essay then goes on to tell of an old blind man who is remaining in the Highlands and to recount his words,

Dh'fhalbh sibh! dh'fhalbh sibh! dh'fhàgadh mise 'm aonar an diugh gu dall aosda, gun bhràthair, gun mhac, gun chul-taice; agus an diugh - là mo dhunach, Dia 'thoirt maitheanais domh - tha thusa, 'Mhàiri, mo nighean, m'aon duine cloinne, le m'oghachan geala, gaolach, a' dol g'am fhagail.³⁶

³⁴ Ibid., p. 541.

³⁵ Norman MacLeod, 'Long Mhór nan Eilthireach' in *Caraid nan Gaidheal* ed. by A. Clerk (Edinburgh, 1899), pp. 263-73 (265).

³⁶ Ibid., p. 266.

The similarity between the two scenes is striking, and both appeared in the same decade, a fact which can hardly have been accidental, especially since MacGregor, as a contributor to Gaelic periodicals himself, would have known MacLeod's essay. At no point does MacGregor openly claim that there is a similarity between slaves and the famine-stricken Gaels, yet the likeness in situations speaks for itself. In addition to impressing upon his readers' minds an understanding of slaves' suffering through inferred similarities, the writer also succeeds, through two particularly graphic images, in conveying the corrupt and evil nature of the slave trade. He describes the slave ships on the African coast as being 'dìreach coltach ri fithich a bhiodh ag itealach os ceann cloaich a' feitheamh fath gu cromadh oirre gu a leòbadh as a chéile'.³⁷ This macabre simile demonstrates the vivid powers of description which MacGregor could draw upon at will to elaborate what is essentially a piece of factual writing. In equally graphic terms he describes the cankerous nature of slavery - 'gu 'n robh tràillealachd coltach ri corp mì-fhallain, a' briseadh a mach 'na leois, 's na sgreaban nach gabhadh leigheas, a dh' aindeoin gach sgil 'us cungaidh a chaidh a ghnàthachadh'.³⁸

Why did MacGregor choose to write about slavery? Should the entire piece be read as an allegory for social oppression in the nineteenth century Highlands? Or was his intention that of distracting attention from social conditions at home, as has been claimed of the antislavery campaign? Although there are clear parallels with the Highlands to be drawn throughout the essay, these are not maintained with sufficient consistency for this to be classified as an allegory. If MacGregor was so concerned with the suffering of the oppressed and did not wish to raise his voice against Highland landlords there were other major social issues closer to home than the American slave to which his attention might have been directed. Slavery, albeit in disguised form, was prevalent in the industrial central belt of Scotland. Sometimes children from the poorhouse would be sold to the highest bid from a mill owner.³⁹ Conditions in mines were characterised by 'deadly physical oppression and

³⁷ Clàr 38, p. 542.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 545.

³⁹ Donald C. Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest* (New York, 1987), p. 40.

systematic slavery'.⁴⁰ This essay on slavery demonstrates a real capacity for compassion in MacGregor, a capacity which might be thought to be lacking since he failed to discuss the suffering of Gaels in such moving terms. These apparent double standards are symptomatic of the extent to which those in the Established Church, and indeed in the Establishment as a whole, were constrained by their position for much of the nineteenth century. Even social problems in Lowland cities might have been perceived as being too close to home for a Highland minister to discuss for fear of undermining the authority of the Establishment. Expressing concern about slavery, however, provided an acceptable means of salving the humanitarian conscience.

In reminding Gaels of their own relative good fortune, Alexander MacGregor does acknowledge that they were suffering hardship and oppression, without elaborating further as to what he actually meant when referring to 'gach cruadal agus sàrachadh a tha na Gàedheil a' fulang'.⁴¹ This reminder would lend support to an argument for MacGregor employing abolitionism for its 'displacement' function; by showing his readers how much worse the situation of others was. Yet to counterbalance this, there are other aspects of the essay which go some way to contradicting this displacement theory.

MacGregor criticises American law, 'laghannan mi-réusanta agus an-ìochdmhor air an deanamh leis an luchd-riaghlaidh'.⁴² This in itself is of interest, since in offering criticism of laws governing slaves MacGregor was indicating that laws could be unjust, whereas as we have seen in the previous chapter he emphasised the need to obey a country's laws, citing France as an example of the result of overturning law and order.⁴³ Even more interesting, in the light of the problems afflicting the Highlands, was his criticism of American ministers. 'Tha iad a' diùltadh facal a ràdh as leith nan tràilleann, a' cumail a mach gu bheil iad anns an t-suidheachadh 's an d' fhàg lagh na rioghachd iad, agus mar an céudna gur h-e an

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 44.

⁴¹ Clàr 40, p. 575.

⁴² Ibid., p. 571.

⁴³ See Chapter 5.

dleasnas faraon a bhi umhal do na laghannan sin'.⁴⁴ As he wrote this, MacGregor may not have been conscious of any resemblance to his colleagues in the Highland clergy at whom similar criticisms had been levelled, or he may have suppressed such opinions. Donald MacLeod, outspoken critic of the Sutherland Clearances, wrote in one of his series of letters to the *Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle*, 'The clergy, too, were continually preaching submission, declaring these proceedings were fore-ordained of God and denouncing the vengeance of Heaven and eternal damnation on those who should presume to make the least resistance'.⁴⁵ Alexander MacGregor attacked his American counterparts for the same lack of a social conscience that characterised the majority of the Highland clergy in the nineteenth century. Just as those entrenched in the mid-nineteenth century Scottish Establishment would not destabilise the system of which they were a part, so he observed of America, 'Tha ministeirean agus luchd-aidmheil do gach ainm ach beag air an cualas iomradh, a gabhail fasgadh fo 'n lagh so, a chuidich iad féin a dheanamh, agus ag ràdh nach 'eil 'n an comas-san dad a dheanamh air son nan tràillean - nach fheud iad eadhoin an saorsa thoirt dhoibh gun lagh na dùthcha a bhriseadh'.⁴⁶

The parallel with the inaction of Highland ministers in the face of social injustice is clear and may have been at least semi-conscious on MacGregor's part. Not only does he demonstrate that the law of a country, as exemplified here by American law, could be unjust and require change, but that ministers' position did not exempt them from criticism. In offering these thoughts on the American Establishment, MacGregor was presenting his Gaelic readers with a precedent in social criticism, against which their own experiences could be compared, and with a portrayal of the Establishment as the oppressor.

One further feature of 'Gearr Chunntas mu Thraillealachd . . .' emerges in the following quotation,

Ach anns gach linn, 's anns gach àite mu bheil cunntas aguinne ann an eachdraidh 's an robh luchd-foirneirt a' buadhachadh, chì sinn gu 'n do thog an

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 573

⁴⁵ MacKenzie, p. 12.

⁴⁶ Clàr 40, p. 573

Tighearna suas daoine' iochdmhor coltach ri Maois a 'dh'amhairc air eallaichibh nan Israelach': agus ri Iob a 'bhrìst gàirdean an fhir-shàrachaidh'.⁴⁷

and when MacGregor talks of American abolitionists -

Daoine, duineil, misneachail a tha coltach ri Maois, a' ròghnachadh àmhghar fhulang maille riùsan a tha air an sàrachadh roimh fhàbhar 's roimh ghean-maith an luchd-fòirneirt . . .⁴⁸

This represents an antecedent to the Liberation Theology which was utilised thirty years later at the time of the Land Agitation. Donald Meek has highlighted the use made by pro-crofting campaigners of Old Testament figures and themes as a means of expressing Highland social conditions and bringing about social change in the later nineteenth century.⁴⁹ The themes of oppression and liberation which characterised this application of the Bible are seen here in a non-Highland context, but used by a Gael. The generalisation of the first quotation could have been equally well employed in a Highland context. Although this is not the first instance of liberation theology being employed by a Highland minister, it is not insignificant. It is indicative of an astute social critic in MacGregor although applied to a situation from which he was distanced. Again the perceptive reader could transfer themes and situations to those closer to home.

Whether MacGregor was sensitive to the fact or not, this essay must have heightened his readers' awareness of social oppression and from that increased their awareness of social injustice in the Highlands. Offering them a precedent in social criticism through the Gaelic language, MacGregor used the Highlands as a frame of reference within which to discuss slavery. The juxtaposition of the two situations which he drew together may well have highlighted the Gaels' case as much as that of the slaves, albeit in a more subtle manner. The timing of the article amidst such great hardship in the Highlands gives the essay its double-edge. There was much from which Gaels' attention might be distracted, but equally their own hardships would have allowed them to relate all the more to this piece of writing. This is one of the

⁴⁷ Clàr 38, p. 547.

⁴⁸ Clàr 40, p. 572.

⁴⁹ Donald E. Meek, 'The Land Question Answered from the Bible: The Land Issue and the Development of a Highland Theology of Liberation', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 103 No. 2, (1987), 84-89.

more significant pieces of Gaelic prose writing from the first half of the nineteenth century, sharpening its readers' consciousness of social oppression, although it seems most likely that this was not what the writer had intended, but that it should serve as a distraction from social crisis closer to home. Ironically, however, MacGregor may have succeeded in focusing attention more closely on the Highlands through his use of imagery drawn from the Highland experience.

Natural Theology

In her study *Gaelic Christianity and Nature*, Mary Low has demonstrated the importance of nature in its broadest sense to the Christian literature and practices of early medieval Ireland and the Reformation Low explores aspects of the continuity between pre-Reformation religion and Christianity within the church around 1800. Emphasising the relationship between the early Christian and medieval periods, what emerges in the course of her work is a strong sense of continuity, or rather 'levels' between Gaelic nature and human beings, perhaps under a universal but unperceived Christian cosmology.¹ The cosmology of the Gaelic Irish or Scottish, was based upon a harmonious relationship between God, the natural (lay or church) and his subjects, and was reflected in a lively personality that is pervasive in its spiritual productivity. This view of the universe with God at its centre, and man at its periphery, is evident in the manner of Gaelic poetry in the Highlands as it developed into the eighteenth century, as highlighted by William Butler in his study of Gaelic song of

¹ Mary Low, *Gaelic Christianity and Nature* (Oxford, 1994), p. 403.

CHAPTER 7

THE NATURAL WORLD

The natural world featured prominently in Alexander MacGregor's writing throughout his life. The heading 'the natural world' is deliberately general in order to accommodate a diverse, yet coherent, body of work. The texts which will be discussed under this heading number no less than fourteen, one of which, on astronomy, contains ten parts. Many of these texts can be categorised as combining the informative function of an essay and the religious function of a sermon. Those which fit this classification are written in Gaelic. MacGregor's writings on natural science provide clear evidence of the range of influences upon his writing. They reveal a writer firmly rooted in Gaelic culture who was equally open to external influences. For the purposes of this discussion his writings on the natural world will be considered within the four categories of natural theology, morality, disseminating information and the natural landscape.

Natural Theology

In her study *Celtic Christianity and Nature*, Mary Low has demonstrated the importance of nature, in its broadest sense, in the Christian literature and traditions of early medieval Ireland and the Hebrides. Low explores aspects of the continuity between primal religion and Christianity within this shared cultural area. Encompassing the relationship between the early Celts and their natural environment, what emerges in the course of her work is 'a strong sense of intimacy, on many levels, between God, nature and human beings, [which] offers a traditional but neglected Christian cosmology'.¹ The cosmology of the Gael, Irish or Scottish, was based upon a harmonious relationship between God, the rightful king (or chief) and his subjects, and was reflected in a land's prosperity, and in particular in its natural productivity. This view of the cosmos still applied in more recent times, and is evident in the reaction of Jacobite poets in the Highlands to Hanoverian rule in the eighteenth century, as highlighted by William Gillies in his study of Gaelic song of

¹ Mary Low, *Celtic Christianity and Nature* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 185.

this period.² Similarly in nineteenth century poetry, the breakdown of the relationship between chiefs and their clansmen manifests itself in the natural world, as for example in Dr John MacLachlan of Rahoy's *Dìreadh a-mach ri Beinn Shianta*,

'S lìonmhor bothan bochd gun àird air
Air gach taobh 'nan làraich uaine,

Agus fàrdach tha gun mhullach
Is 'na thulaich aig an fhuaran.

Far an robh 'n teine 's na pàisdean,
'S ann as àirde dh'fhàs an luachair.³

Equally important is the place of the natural world in the everyday life of the Gaels. Over the centuries their lives depended upon the bounty of nature for survival, whether from the land or the sea, and the agricultural cycle provided life's structure. Virtually all aspects of life were closely bound up with nature and this remained true of the Highlands in post-industrial Britain. Gaels looked to nature as a means of prognostication, such as observing the behaviour of animals and birds as a weather forecast. Similarly, a cockerel crowing or a frog in the house might be associated with death. This intimacy with the natural world is further demonstrated in Alexander Carmichael's nineteenth century collection of charms, *Carmina Gadelica*. It contains a diverse body of popular beliefs pertaining to the everyday life of the Gaels. Within this collection the natural world features prominently. Laura S. Sugg has discussed the role of nature within the collection, and concludes that nature is one of the 'agents' through which God is experienced, whether it be through the sun, moon, stars, the elements, plants, animals or insects. God's immanence, or active presence, manifests itself through those agents which He has created and which are a means of protection, healing and divination.⁴

It was in this rural, pre-industrial environment that Alexander MacGregor was raised, with perhaps a heightened understanding and appreciation of his surroundings, and this manifests itself in his familiarity with the literature, beliefs

² William Gillies, 'Gaelic Songs of the 'Forty-Five', *SS*, 30 (1991), 19-58 (22).

³ Donald E. Meek, *Tuath is Tighearna: Tenants and Landlords* (Edinburgh, 1995), p. 57.

⁴ Laura S. Sugg, 'The experience of God in everyday life in Alexander Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1997), p. 137 and pp. 240-44.

and traditions of the Gaels. Yet one must look beyond the Highlands to see that in his writings about nature, he was in step with current religious thought. Almost without exception, his writings on the natural world reflect the prevailing influence of natural theology. 1803 had seen the publication of William Paley's *Natural Theology*, which proved to be a seminal work on the subject during the first half of the nineteenth century, although publications on natural theology had proliferated in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. D. L. LeMahieu in his study of William Paley has described the purpose of natural theology as being:

To demonstrate rationally the existence of God and to establish by inductive reasoning his chief attributes. The motive behind this exercise, however, was to reconcile both the findings of science and the dictates of reason with the already pre-existing emotional and spiritual commitment which practising Christians felt towards God.⁵

Another fundamental nineteenth century work of natural theology was the Rev. William Whewell's *Bridgewater Treatise, Astronomy and General Physics considered with reference to Natural Theology*, published in 1834.

Scottish theologians such as William Cunningham and Thomas Chalmers also lectured and wrote on natural theology.⁶ As mentioned in Chapter 1, Thomas Chalmers was Professor of Divinity while MacGregor was a student of divinity in Edinburgh, and may have shaped his thoughts. Natural theology's popularity owed much to its capacity to reconcile scientists and theologians, whose interdependence was becoming increasingly strained in the face of such scientific advances as geological discoveries which appeared to contradict the account of the Creation in Genesis. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* of 1859 upset both scientific and religious communities with its theory of evolution by Natural Selection. Yet this revolutionary work has been described as 'the last great work of Victorian theology', written by a man trained in natural theology and aimed at an audience who subscribed to natural theology.⁷ The most fundamental cause of dissent in Darwin's

⁵ D. L. LeMahieu, *The Mind of William Paley* (Nebraska, 1976), p. 53.

⁶ *DSCHT*, p. 621.

⁷ John Durant, 'Darwinism and Divinity: A Century of Debate' in *Darwinism and Divinity*, ed. by John Durant (Oxford, 1985), pp. 9-39 (16).

theory was that Natural Selection removed the need to attribute organic development to Design and Purpose as laid down by a higher power.⁸

At no point in his writings does MacGregor mention Darwinian theory or any contemporary conflict between religion and science. It seems highly unlikely that he would have been unaware of it, having a proven interest in natural philosophy from his time at King's College, where he distinguished himself in Natural Philosophy, an interest which he almost undoubtedly pursued through his reading thereafter.⁹ Whether or not he accepted or rejected Darwinian theory cannot be ascertained from his writing or from what little has been written about him. What MacGregor chose to write about was dictated by what he perceived his audience to be. It seems most likely that Natural Selection was too radical, too new and too controversial to merit inclusion in his work at the expense of more generally accepted scientific fact. As we have seen in the context of the Disruption, MacGregor was silent on controversial matters, and in his scientific writings he was no different. His essays were not aimed at intellectual discourse with his peers, who were well-versed in the controversy, but were intended for the average Gael, as a means of providing instruction in more basic scientific concepts in his native language. Thus he explains in the first part of his series on astronomy that his aim is 'chum cuideachadh a dheanamh le do luchd-leughaidh, a Ghàidheil ionmhuinn, gu beagan nithe a thoirt fa'near mu astar, meud, agus siubhal nan reult'.¹⁰ Similarly in 'An Coral' he writes, 'A reir coslais, tha na h-uiread de luchd-leughaidh a' Ghaidheil nach cuala riamh iomradh mu mheanbh-bheathaichean a' *chorail*'.¹¹ In a sense then, by ignoring more controversial issues, his writing falls short of the aims of nineteenth century Gaelic periodicals, which shared the common purpose of making available to Gaelic that which was to be found in print in English. In reality, this only applied if furthering the goals of edification and attending to readers' spiritual welfare - his first duty.

MacGregor's writings on the natural world take the form of essays of varying length, perhaps belying their origins as sermons, or excerpts from sermons. As has

⁸ Alvar Ellegard, *Darwin and the General Reader* (Göteborg, 1958), p. 102.

⁹ A[lexander] M[acKenzie], 'The Rev. Alexander MacGregor, M.A.', *CM*, 74 (1881), 92-98 (p. 94).

¹⁰ Clàr 8 (b), p. 225.

¹¹ Clàr 39 (b), p. 353.

already been noted, only one of MacGregor's sermons has survived; however, essays such as those on astronomy abound in Biblical quotation, in addition to the repetition and imperatives characteristic of preaching. The common theme throughout is that of nature manifesting God's grace and wisdom, in line with the principles of natural theology. In the first part of his series on astronomy, first published in 1841, he writes,

Nach ceart a dh'fheudas daoine a' cheist a chur, Có a rinn na nithe mora, maiseach, agus miorbhuileach so? Có, ach an Dia sin, "a rinn an talamh le 'chumhachd - a shocruidh an saoghal le 'ghliocas, - agus le 'thuigse a sgaoil a mach na nèamha." (Ier. x. 12)¹²

This is echoed throughout the series of essays, as MacGregor continues to remind his readers of God's power and wisdom as demonstrated by each revelation about the workings of the universe

Tha cumhachd neo-chrìochnuichte Iehobhaih air 'fhoillseachadh d'ar sealladh, agus d'ar tuigse, air mhodh miorbhuileach, leis na solusaibh a ta triall gu neo-mhearachdach 'nan cuairtibh sònruichte, agus a ta, mar sin, a' co'-lionadh na criche air son an d'rinneadh iad air tùs! Cò, uime sin, aig am bheil comus amharc air na comharaibh mòr' agus soillseach so, gun a bhi a' beachd-smuaineachadh air bith, air làthaireachd, agus air cumhachd an Tì sin, trìd am bheil gach ni anns na nèamhaibh, agus air an talamh, a' co'-sheasamh?¹³

This expression of natural theology is not restricted to the essays on astronomy. 'Air Meanbh-bheathaichibh na Cruitheachd' begins 'ge b'e àit air an tilg sinn ar sùilean, chì sinn mèur an Dé uile-làthairich air a nochdadh ann an lìonmhoireachd do-àireamh do chréutairibh éugsamhla aig am bheil beatha'.¹⁴ In 'An Coral' he writes 'an uair a bhios sinn, mar so, a' suidheachadh ar n-inntinn air gach obair mhiorbhuileach a chithear mu'n cuairt duinn' bu choir dhuinn beachdachadh le mor umhlachd air cumhachd, gliocas, agus maitheas neo-chrìochnach an Tighearna'.¹⁵

¹² Clàr 8 (a), p.13.

¹³ Clàr 11 (a), p. 110.

¹⁴ Clàr 16, p. 284.

¹⁵ Clàr 39 (a), p. 556.

Morality: the moral message in nature

In some of his work, which falls somewhere between written sermons and essays, MacGregor draws upon the natural world to convey a moral message to his readers. The best example is 'An Seangan' in which he combines moralising and informing. This essay, which appeared in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* in 1843, echoes Dughall Buchanan's poem *An Geamhradh*, in drawing upon the ant as an example for men to follow. Buchanan, influenced as he was by the English 'graveyard poets' and by James Thomson's *The Seasons*, created in *An Geamhradh* a parable for old age and approaching death.¹⁶ In doing so he has recourse to those creatures which devote themselves to preparing for the impending winter, namely the bee and the ant, in contrast with the flies which die in winter after their carefree summer,

Faic a' chuileag 'ga dìteadh
Le sìonntaibh an nàduir,
'S o dhibir i 'n séason,
Gur h-éigin di bàsach';
Faic gliocas an t-seangain,
'Na thional cho tràthail,
'S dean eiseimpleir leanail,
Chum t' anam a' shàbhail.¹⁷

Buchanan's message is unequivocal in its condemnation of worldly pleasures in favour of preparing the soul for eternal life. MacGregor uses the same symbol of the industrious ant, but in a milder tone. 'An Seangan', after MacGregor's initial reminder that man can learn much from the creatures which God has put on the earth, continues as an exposition of the life and habits of the ant. He anthropomorphises the ant to such an extent that were it not for the occasional use of the word 'seangan', the reader might be forgiven for thinking that these were people being discussed. He tells us: 'Tha na seanganan ag oibreachadh a là agus a dh'oidhche, agus a réir coslais, cha'n 'eil feúm aca air tàmh no codal!'. Even the rearing of their offspring appears human. 'Tha iad a' gabhail mòr-chùraim d'an oigridh, le bhi 'gan seòladh agus 'gan teagasg gu bhi deanadach, agus dìchiollach'.¹⁸ Just as the verse previously quoted from *An*

¹⁶ Dòmhnall E. Meek, 'Ath-sgrùdadh Dughall Buchanan (II)', *Gairm*, 148 (1989), 319-31 (pp. 323-26).

¹⁷ Donald MacLean, *The Spiritual Songs of Dugald Buchanan* (Edinburgh, 1913), p. 57.

¹⁸ Clàr 23, p. 330.

Geamhradh echoes the Book of Proverbs 6. 6-12, so too does 'An Seangan' when MacGregor writes, 'Os ceann gach uile ni eile, tha iad cùramach chum solar a dheanamh air son a' gheamhraidh'. In fact he concludes the essay on Paraphrases 12, which is based on these verses from the Book of Proverbs. This particular Biblical verse presented a ready made example of the Victorian work ethic with its juxtaposition of the diligent and the lazy in the ant and the fly. The verse seems to have struck a chord with Gaelic writers. Donald MacKechnie, at the beginning of the twentieth century was also to draw upon it in his essay 'An Seangan', in which he takes a somewhat ironic approach to Solomon's advice.¹⁹ MacGregor's stance is less unyielding than Buchanan's, as might be expected of an Established Church minister, compared with that of an evangelist, although the essence of the message remains the same. Unlike Buchanan, MacGregor avoided focusing on the negative, - Buchanan's 'cuileagan ciatach' - merely emphasising the positive.

Another instance of this positive use of nature by MacGregor appears in 'An t-Earrach' which he contributed to *An Gaidheal* in 1874. He uses the cyclical nature of the seasons to reaffirm his personal belief in the regeneration of the soul after death,

Ma tha 'n saoghal 'n a laidhe gu neo-mhothachail, marbh, fo chuirtean reota a' gheamhraidh, agus ma thig aiseirigh thairis air, leis an duisgear suas gach luibh agus blath, agus gach eun-cheol agus suilbhearachd, an urrainn e bhi nach eirich an duine sin a ris a tha ann an trom chodal a' bhais, agus nach duisg e suas chum beatha nuaidh, agus chum gach deagh dhochas a shealbhachadh!²⁰

This use of spring to symbolise apparently unconditional resurrection is indicative of the warm Christian compassion which pervades MacGregor's writing. Buchanan's 'spring' is far from unconditional, as *An Geamhradh* demonstrates. MacGregor's second sentence, 'tha 'n t-Earrach a' giulan air a sgiathaibh moran a bharrachd air gorm-dhreach na macharach, agus faile cubhraidh nam blath', almost seems to echo verses 2-4 of *An Geamhradh* which begins 'sgaoil oirne a sgiathan' and goes on to enumerate all that which winter removes.

¹⁹ Dòmhnall MacEacharn, *Am Fear-Ciùil* (Glasgow, 1904), pp. 136-41.

²⁰ Clàr 82.

Another short article in which MacGregor preaches more than he teaches is 'Gach Ni Na Thràth'. Here again he draws upon the natural world as a source of example for man. He uses it to condemn procrastination in a quiet, yet forceful manner.

Tha dàil cunnartach. Seall air Nàdair, agus cha dean i dàil. Cha chuir cumhachd talmhaidh sam bith stad air. Cha 'n 'eil oibre Nàdair mu'n cuairt duit a' deanamh dàil. An uair a thig an t-àm do na blàthaibh briseadh a mach, brisidh iad a mach; agus do'n duilleach tuiteam, agus tuitidh e. [. . .] Na'n deanadh na rionnagan dàil 'nan cuairtibh bheireadh iad sgrios gu h-obunn air a' chruitheachd, agus thuiteadh gach ni ann an àimhreite. Na'n cuireadh Nàdar dàil 'na h-oibribh air an talamh, thigeadh gortaidh, agus plàighean, agus truaighean a chuireadh as do gach duine, agus ainmhidh, agus créutair beo air uachdar an t-saoghail'.²¹

This also suggests, not so much the need to comply with nature, but that man does not have a choice in following this divine ordering of the world. As with 'An Seangan', MacGregor uses nature as a means of strengthening his advice on man's conduct, his examples validated by the fact that they were created thus by God.

Before concluding this section, one final article merits mention. In 'Sonas nan Ainmhidh agus nan Eun' he instructs readers that animals should be well treated. In keeping with what Paul Turner has described as the 'growth of humane feeling for all types of underdog, from slaves, factory-workers and convicts to actual dogs, horses and other animals', MacGregor asserts, 'tha e mar fhiachaibh air na h-uile bhi cairdeil ris na bruidibh bochda nach urrainn an uireasbhuidhean fein 'innseadh, agus gun a bhi uair sam bith 'g an geur-leanmhuinn agus 'g an gearradh as'.²² In common with the other writing discussed in this section, MacGregor uses his subject both as a means of conveying a moral message, if kindness to animals can justifiably be described as 'moral', and of increasing his readers' awareness of the environment of which they themselves are a part.

²¹ Clàr 113, pp. 268-69.

²² Paul Turner, *English Literature 1832-1890 Excluding the Novel* (Oxford, 1989), p. 7; Clàr 70, p. 272.

Disseminating Information

David Vincent has observed that the emergence of mass literature in nineteenth century Britain extended the influence of the clergy beyond the pulpit.²³ This was undoubtedly the case with the emerging Gaelic press, which was dominated by the clergy, at least until the 1870s. MacGregor's writings on the natural world demonstrate that the Gaelic periodical press could and did amplify the voice of the Church. Not only were sermons published, in the earlier periodicals, but also essays such as MacGregor's on the natural world which combined education and preaching. At the same time as revealing God's grace, he follows the nineteenth century trend for disseminating useful information, by explaining the movement of the planets or the growth of coral.

MacGregor's didactic purpose in revealing the world of natural science to Gaelic readers bears close comparison with the stated aims of *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*. This magazine seems to have provided a model for Gaelic periodical literature in the first half of the nineteenth century, with its popular appeal and its educational tone. The assertion in the editorial of the *Journal's* first issue that 'the grand leading principle by which I have been actuated, is to take advantage of the universal appetite for instruction which at present exists' reflects the improving ethos of the nineteenth century and might be appropriated to indicate the nature of MacGregor's motivation for writing such essays as 'An Coral'.²⁴ *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* fulfilled its grand aims with a series of articles entitled 'Popular Information on Literature' and 'Popular Information on Science'. MacGregor sees the purpose of *Cuairtear nan Gleann* and the journals which followed it as being 'chum iadsan a ta aineolach a theagasg, iadsan a ta mi-chùramach a dhùsgadh, agus iadsan a ta aingidh a ghairm gu h-aithreachas'.²⁵ His essays demonstrate a concern that Gaels be equipped with basic knowledge which would then enable them to comprehend contemporary scientific discoveries. His essay on coral demonstrates that he was

²³ David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 175.

²⁴ *CEJ*, 4 February 1832, p. 1.

²⁵ *Clàr* 20, p. 119.

aware of contemporary advances in natural science and that he aimed to inform and educate the Gaels within the parameters of the Scriptures and in their own language.

It was only in the middle of the eighteenth century that the true nature of coral had been established. From the Classical times of Pliny and Ovid, coral had been thought to be a form of plant or a stone which grew. This idea was only dispelled in 1753 when the Sieur de Peyssonnel, lecturing to the Royal Society of London, described corals as being like oysters and other shellfish in that they could create their own protective shell.²⁶ Compared with previously held theories which had survived for the preceding two thousand years, this was, therefore, a very recent discovery. Within MacGregor's own time much attention was devoted to this aspect of geology by both Charles Darwin and Charles Lyell, an eminent geologist. In 1842 Darwin published *The Structure and Distribution of Coral Reefs*, in which he focused on the formation of atoll and barrier reefs.²⁷ Lyell devoted a chapter to coral in his *Principles of Geology*. In MacGregor's 1849 essay 'An Coral' he explains the growth of coral in simple, graphic terms, describing how these tiny creatures construct massive reefs with which manmade structures such as the Great Wall of China and the Pyramids cannot compare. As is demonstrated elsewhere in this thesis, Alexander MacGregor clearly read *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* in the 1830s and 1840s and so he may have been influenced by an article entitled 'Corals' which appeared in the journal in 1836.²⁸ It bears some similarity to MacGregor's in so far as it does not focus on recent scientific theories, but explains the rudiments of the subject in relatively simple terms. MacGregor, however, begins and concludes his essay by reminding readers of 'cumhachd, gliocas, agus maitheas neo-chriochnach an Tighearna De uile-ghlormhor a dhealbh na h-uile nithe'.²⁹

Clearly, MacGregor did not feel constrained to limit himself to writing about the familiar. Just as readers of English language publications were offered insights

²⁶ Frank Dawson Adams, *The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences* (London, 1938), pp. 130-32.

²⁷ For a brief explanation of Darwin's theory on atoll and barrier reefs see Ruth Moore, *Charles Darwin* (London, 1957), pp. 98-99.

²⁸ See Chapter 8: Highland Folklore, which discusses whether or not MacGregor may have contributed articles to *CEJ*.

²⁹ Clàr 39 (a), p. 557.

into the exotic and the distant, so too were Gaels. Another point of interest is the range of MacGregor's subject matter, the extremities of his focus. In 'An Coral' he describes some of the universe's tiniest creatures. His essays on astronomy represent the opposite end of the spectrum. This decision to discuss both the immense and the minuscule underline the central point of his essays, namely the power and goodness of God that he should have created not only the immense universe, but also the tiniest creatures which inhabit it. The range of MacGregor's informative writings echoes the words of Thomas Chalmers,

About the time of the invention of the telescope, another instrument was formed, which laid open a scene no less wonderful, and rewarded the inquisitive spirit of man. This was the microscope. The one led me to see a system in every star; the one led me to see a world in every atom. The one taught me that this mighty globe, with the whole burden of its people and its countries, is but a grain of sand on the high field of immensity; the other teaches me that every grain of sand may harbour within it the tribes and the families of a busy population [. . .] but where the wonder-working God finds the room for the exercise of all his attributes, where he can raise another mechanism of worlds, and fill and animate them all with the evidence of his glory.³⁰

Compare this with MacGregor's own revelation to readers of the barely conceivable scale of the universe:

Cha soirbh le daoinibh neo-fhòghluimte a chreidsinn gu 'm bheil na rionnagan beaga, boisgeach sin, a chìthear os an ceann anns na spéuraibh, 'nan saoghalaibh a ta ceud, no mìle, no muillean uair, nì's mò ann am meud na'n talamh so air am bheil sinn féin a' gluasad! Air a' cheart dòigh, cha soirbh leo creidsinn gu 'm bheil muilleanan gun àireamh ann do mheanbh-chréutairibh gluasadach, nach fhaicear, a thaobh an lughaid, leis an t-sùil luim! Ach, gu cinnteach, tha 'n dà chuid fìor.³¹

This bears comparison with the poem *Thug mi 'n oidhche raoir glé shàmhach* by twentieth century poet Donald Macintyre which captures the breadth of entertainment and education to be found in the taigh-céilidh, enumerating the topics for conversation and including the following lines which would not have been out of place in one of MacGregor's essays on the natural world,

³⁰ 'Boundlessness of the Creation', *CEJ*, 28 April 1832, p. 103.

³¹ Clàr 16, p. 285.

Gun robh 'n giolcam-daobhram sinte
Ri bacan iosgaid na frìde.³²

It may be the case that this type of information was entering the céilidh as a result of people having read articles such as MacGregor's in Gaelic journals. Although MacGregor was making scientific advances more accessible to Gaels, he was also contributing to the shift from an oral to a literary culture, providing readers with information which might not have been available to them within the informal education of the céilidh.

Reference has already been made to the influence of *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*. Another instance of parallels between writing which appeared in its pages and writings by MacGregor is to be found in a piece entitled 'Parasitical Animals' from a series, 'Sketches on Natural History'. This essay which appeared in 1842 discusses the gad-fly and its method of reproduction through a horse's digestive system.³³ In 1877 'A' Chreithleag' by MacGregor appeared in *An Gaidheal* and discusses this very subject in explicit detail.³⁴ In this he combines the familiar and the new in one succinct essay. He immediately establishes familiar ground with his readers, asking, 'Cò nach robh gu minic air a chlaoidh leis na lotaibh guineach aice air feasgar blàth samhraidh?' before proceeding to reveal how the fly's offspring grow inside a horse's stomach before becoming a chrysalis and then a fly. Even today, MacGregor's combination of the familiar and the less familiar makes for compelling reading. He is highly consistent in maintaining a clear element of the familiar while disseminating new information to his readers. It may be that he made selective use of *Chambers' Journal*, adapting material to suit his own purposes. Essays by other contributors to *Cuairtear nan Gleann* also provide ground for comparison with the scientific output of *Chambers' Journal*. Articles on 'heat' by Rob Ruadh and on 'coal' by C., which appeared in *Cuairtear nan Gleann*, had their antecedents in the Edinburgh periodical.³⁵

³² Somerled MacMillan ed., *Sporan Dhòmhnaill* (Edinburgh, 1968), pp. 129-31 (130).

³³ *CEJ*, 13 August 1842, p. 234.

³⁴ *Clàr* 119.

³⁵ Rob Ruadh, 'Laghanna Teas', *CG*, 9 (1840), 208-11 and 'Teas' in *CG*, 11 (1841), 248-52; C., 'Gual', *CG*, 10 (1840), 227-31. In *CEJ* Nos. 23 and 30 articles on 'heat' appeared as part of 'Popular Information on Science'. In No. 46, 1832 an article entitled 'Coal' appeared. The identity of Rob Ruadh

One of Alexander MacGregor's lengthiest Gaelic articles is in ten parts under the title 'Air Cruinn-chorpaibh nan Speur'. The first four parts of the article appeared in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* in 1841, and appear to be the first published writing in modern Scottish Gaelic on astronomy. These were then republished in 1872 and 1873 in *An Gaidheal* followed by another six parts. This republication in *An Gaidheal* of material from earlier periodicals is far from uncommon, and many of MacGregor's articles, as well as a number of those by Caraid nan Gaidheal, found their way into print again in this way. Between these two publications of MacGregor's series on astronomy, Duncan Connell's *Reul-Eolas* appeared in print in 1856. Connell makes no reference to MacGregor's articles of the previous decade, and likewise, MacGregor, in the 1870s, makes no reference to *Reul-Eolas*. Although parts VI - X of MacGregor's essay first appeared in print some thirty years after parts I - IV, it is possible, and indeed entirely likely, that he had written the entire series in the early 1840s, despite only four of the ten parts being published in *Cuairtear*. This is suggested by his omission of any reference to a scientific discovery made between the publication and republication. In 1846 Neptune was discovered by the French astronomer, Urbain Jean Joseph Leverrier, a fact to which Connell refers in his book.³⁶ MacGregor, however, makes no reference to Neptune, despite mentioning all the other planets in his ten-part article. This points to the series having been entirely written in the early 1840s and then published in *An Gaidheal* without being updated.

This series of articles would also seem to have been written as a series, rather than being originally one essay subdivided for serialisation. Reading them as one essay the reader is aware of much repetition at the beginning of each; continuity from one essay to the next is maintained by reiterating the fundamental point of the essays that the mechanism and beauty of the universe is a manifestation of the power and wisdom of God. Once again, MacGregor's writings demonstrate the way in which the

is not clear other than that he was Dr. Robert McGregor, as the following excerpt from *FT*, 9 (1848), p. 277 indicates: 'gun deachaidh ar fear dùthcha Dr. Robert McGregor (Rob Ruadh) a roghnachadh mar aon de Ard-leighean Tigh-eiridinn Rìoghail Ghlascho air an 7mh latha de 'n mhios a dh-fhalbh'. Rob Ruadh does not seem to be related to Alexander MacGregor. I hope to pursue the topic of other contributors to Gaelic periodicals in the course of further research.

³⁶ Donnchadh M. Conall, *Reul-Eolas: anns am bheil Cunntas air Cuspairibh An Rian-Ghreine agus Fath-Sgriobhadh, 's am bheil Gearr-shealladh air na Reultaibh Suidhichte* (Edinburgh, 1856), pp. 102-3.

nineteenth century press provided the clergy with an additional outlet for their teaching.

These writings also reflect another aspect of the nineteenth century impetus to disseminate useful knowledge to the population at large. Those promoting literacy believed in the need to dispel ignorance and 'superstition' which they saw as being perpetuated by an oral tradition.³⁷ The rise in literacy was to lead to a change in the understanding of, and relationship, with the surrounding environment. Donald MacKinnon, writing in 1875, observes the effect of this changing relationship. 'Ach tarruing a thaobh am brat a tha 'comhdach na Diomhaireachd, thoir lochran an Eolais a steach do'n ionad naomha so, agus ruaigidh tu tuillidh a's Aineolas - ruaigidh tu Spiorad na h-irisleachd, na h-umhlachd agus moran de Spiorad an fhior ghliocais'.³⁸ In contemplating the new world of which the Gael is a part, a world in which scientific advances reveal the world to man and improved communications bring men closer together, MacKinnon sees man's demystification of his environment as undermining his appreciation of it, 'ag ardachadh ar meas air cumhachd an duine agus ag isleachadh greadhnachas an talmhainn 'n ar suilean'.³⁹ MacGregor takes the opposite standpoint. Instead of elevating man, he presents the reader with a clear reminder of his lowliness in the Creation,

Gu cinnteach is dall, aineolach, agus neo-mhothachail an neach a thilgeas a shùilean air reultaibh soillseach nèimh, gun e fein isleachadh agus gun fhaicinn cia co dìblidh 's a ta e, agus cia co suarach 'sa ta a ghnìomhara a's fearr, an coimeas ri àilleachd an t-seallaidh a chì e, agus ri cumhachd neo-chriochnuichte an Ti a dhealbh nèamh agus talamh, á neoni!⁴⁰

Both points of view are equally valid, representing the dichotomies of scientific advances. For MacGregor's reader there is no sense of conflict between scientific discovery and religion, but one of reinforcement. Indeed his depiction of the order and structure of the natural world which science reveals may well have had a special appeal to the nineteenth century Gael. Whether describing the movement of planets, the growth of coral, or the life of the horse-fly, MacGregor's essays on natural

³⁷ Vincent, Chapter 5, pp. 156-95.

³⁸ D[onald] McK[innon], 'Sean-fhocail. I Ciod iad?', *An G.*, 37 (1875), 2-8, (p.3).

³⁹ MacKinnon p. 5.

⁴⁰ Clàr 10 (b), p. 251.

science are a manifestation of stability and continuity within a rapidly changing world. At a time of immense social change for many Gaels, Alexander MacGregor provided a measure of reassurance that in an age of rapid change and social turmoil, the natural workings of the world remained firmly under God's control, and thus unaffected.

As Chapter 8 discusses, Alexander MacGregor had a strong interest in popular beliefs and customs of the Highlands, an interest based on these being part of a rapidly vanishing past, rather than as a sustainable aspect of the present.⁴¹ Clearly, he saw the advance of science as eroding the 'superstitious' beliefs of the Gaels, a development which he welcomed with only slight regret. In fact, his essays on astronomy represent a twofold offensive against such beliefs. MacGregor uses scientific facts simultaneously to demonstrate to readers the workings of their environment and to reinforce God's omnipresence, leaving no place for 'superstition'. Yet MacGregor's contemporary, Alexander Carmichael, refers to traces remaining in Gaelic tradition of beliefs relating to the moon and sun. With reference to the custom of saluting the morning sun and hailing the new moon he wrote, 'The practice prevailed over the British Isles, nor is it yet obsolete, though now a matter of form more than of belief.'⁴² Carmichael's collection contains some forty separate texts which make use of such epithets as God/King/son of the elements, the sun, the stars, the moon, the skies and the globe.⁴³ In his attempts to incorporate the familiar alongside the less familiar, MacGregor acknowledges the moon, sun and stars as being of great importance to mariners. 'Tha na gealaichean aig Iupitar agus Saturn, uime sin, anabarrach féumail duinne, a chionn gur ann leò sin a's cinntiche a gheibh maraichean a mach a' cheart àit air doimhneachdaibh na fairge anns am bi iad na air sheòl sam bi eile'.⁴⁴ To many Gaels, the moon indicated whether or not the time was propitious for certain actions such as killing an animal, cutting trees, cutting peats or shearing sheep. Yet despite MacGregor's known interest in popular beliefs he conspicuously makes no mention of them in these essays. It may be that he perceived

⁴¹ See Chapter 8: Highland Folklore.

⁴² Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh, 1940), p. 274.

⁴³ Sugg, p. 183.

⁴⁴ Clàr 55, p. 6.

these beliefs as less 'lamentable' than belief in supernatural beings, or it may be that he was too focused on the scientific to explicitly condemn the 'superstitious'.

The Natural Landscape

In the 1870s, Alexander MacGregor wrote three articles about Highland scenery: one in Gaelic describing Skye, and the other two in English looking at the Highlands and Islands generally, but with a specific focus on Skye. These have less in common with MacGregor's other writings than they do with the accounts of nineteenth century travellers in the Highlands. Since the second half of the eighteenth century, the number of travellers to the Highlands and Islands had increased dramatically. This was primarily due to the defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden and the ensuing legislative measures against the Highlands, which made the region a safer place for travellers. Another after-effect of Culloden was the improvement of roads in Scotland, a measure intended to allow the army to move with more speed in case of further rebellion, but which had the additional effect of facilitating travel for the general public. Prior to Culloden, travellers tended not to venture north of the 'Highland Line'. Of those who did travel further north, reactions to the countryside were not always favourable, as Captain Edward Burt's account of c.1730 demonstrates. He describes the mountains' 'stupendous Bulk, frightful Irregularity, and horrid Gloom made yet more sombrous by the Shades and faint Reflections they communicate to one another'.⁴⁵ In contrast, over a century later, Queen Victoria echoed the sentiments of many other travellers when she wrote of the scenery of the Trossachs 'this solitude, the romance and wild loveliness of everything here . . . then there is that beautiful heather which you do not see elsewhere. I prefer it greatly to Switzerland glorious as the scenery of that country is'.⁴⁶

There were a number of reasons for this change in popular perception of Highland scenery. Possibly the most influential factor was the publication in 1761 of James MacPherson's *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem, in Six Books: Together with several other Poems composed by Ossian, the Son of Fingal*. This 'epic poem' pushed

⁴⁵ Edward Burt, *Burt's Letters from the North of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1974), p. 33.

⁴⁶ D. Duff, *Queen Victoria's Highland Journals* (Exeter, 1980), pp. 147-48.

Scotland to the forefront of European awareness as a nation which was a unique remnant of an earlier society in an increasingly progressive century. Coinciding with the stirrings of the Romantic movement, travellers from the Continent, and further afield, toured Scotland to see a landscape which embodied all that was savage, grand, wild and melancholy in Highland civilisation.⁴⁷ Highland scenery had become picturesque.

The first half of the nineteenth century saw Highland scenery becoming even more popular thanks to the writings of Sir Walter Scott. Scott's *Lady of the Lake*, for instance, first published in 1810, had sold fifty thousand copies by 1836, having sold twenty thousand in the first year after its publication.⁴⁸ Scott's historical romances caught the imagination of the European literary public and built on the romantic picture of Scotland created by MacPherson's *Ossian*. Many of these 'romantic tourists' published accounts of their tours in Scotland. One such visitor was Frenchman, Amedée Pichot, whose account appeared in print in 1822 as *Historical and Literary Tour of a Foreigner in England and Scotland*. In it he conveys something of the theatrical aura which surrounded the Scottish landscape as a result of Scott's recreation of Scotland's past. The reality of the fictional landscape is evident when a view brings an incident in *The Lady of the Lake* to his mind,

Not far from thence was the scene of the terrible conflict, foot to foot, between Roderick and Fitz-James . . . and by degrees we found ourselves in the bosom of the defile at the very spot, perhaps, where the gallant courser of Fitz-James fell.⁴⁹

Pichot was far from being alone in viewing the scenery through Scott's writings. The German Theodore Fontane, who toured Scotland in 1858, wrote of the Trossachs, 'If we are to understand and enjoy this country it is necessary that we should have at least a nodding acquaintance with the poem of that name [*The Lady of the Lake*]'.⁵⁰ A

⁴⁷ See for example, Christopher Smout, 'Tours in the Scottish Highlands from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries', *Northern Scotland*, 5 (1983) 99-122.

⁴⁸ J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott* vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1902), p. 171.

⁴⁹ Amedée Pichot, *Historical and Literary Tour of a Foreigner in England and Scotland* (London, 1825), pp. 476-79.

⁵⁰ Theodore Fontane, *Across the Tweed* (London, 1965), p. 104.

very similar interpretation of the landscape is to be found in Alexander MacGregor's description of the Trossachs.

When passing through the narrow defile of the Trossachs, the spot is seen where Fitz-James's horse exhausted fell, as also the "narrow and broken plain", at the eastern opening where Sir Walter supposes the Scottish troops, under the Earls of Mar and Moray to have paused ere they entered that dark and dangerous glen, nor will the vivid description of the scene which took place, when the archers entered the defile, be forgotten.⁵¹

MacGregor's scenic description continues in the same vein with the landscape brought to life by its historical and fictional associations. The first in the two part essay 'Highland and Island Scenery' which MacGregor contributed to the *Celtic Magazine* in 1879 reads like the travel journal of a nineteenth century visitor to Scotland, beginning in Ayr and moving north to Loch Lomond, Loch Katrine and onwards. The question begs as to whether MacGregor himself had travelled this route at some point in his life. The most likely answer is that he had not, although it is not impossible that he may have been to some of the places which he describes. The style of the passage points more to his having drawn on published travellers' accounts and on his own knowledge of Scottish history and literature, being an impersonal description, peppered with quotations from travellers and from literature. His language is not dissimilar to the exaggerated style of many accounts, as for example, when he writes of Loch Katrine,

It is impossible for the imagination to conceive a succession of scenery more sublime and imposing than is displayed around this splendid lake. Nature seems to have assumed her wildest and most romantic aspect. Mountains, precipices, and lofty rocks appear as if thrown around in the rudest form, while trees and shrubs give variety and grace to the landscape.⁵²

In the second part of the essay, MacGregor claims that it was his own description of the Quiraing in Skye, published in the *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, which first drew the attention of tourists to its beauty.⁵³ This may be something of an overstatement on MacGregor's part, as the Quiraing seems to have already been part of the prescribed Skye tourist route by the time his account was

⁵¹ Clàr 237.

⁵² Ibid., p. 244.

⁵³ Clàr 238, p. 281.

published in 1845.⁵⁴ This second part focuses primarily on Skye, with which MacGregor was definitely familiar. In common with so many of the travel writers of his day, his beautiful scenery lacks people, unless they are part of a historical event. This is typical of the period, as James Hunter has observed when he commented that 'Highlanders found themselves condemned to live simultaneously, as it were, in two parallel universes'.⁵⁵ One was the universe of famine and clearance, the other, one of escapist romanticism. As demonstrated in an earlier chapter, MacGregor was as aware as anyone of the reality of life in the Highlands. His intended readership for these pieces was presumably more that of an émigré audience seeking just such a romantic depiction of the Highlands. That is certainly what he provides, concluding on an unashamedly romantic note, 'we bid farewell to the romantic land of heroes - that land of mountain and of flood, of tradition and of song, of daring deeds and of warm-hearted hospitality'.⁵⁶

'An t-Eilean Sgiathanach' which appeared in *An Gaidheal* in 1875, seems to have been inspired by a poem by Alexander Nicolson of the same name which was published in the same journal six months earlier.⁵⁷ Nicolson's poem merits less comment than MacGregor's article, being merely one of many nineteenth century Gaelic poems in praise of a place and coming in the wake of the great eighteenth century nature poets, Donnchadh Bàn Mac-an-t-Saoir and Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair. Clearance and emigration occasioned many such compositions in verse, but MacGregor's, being in prose, is less usual. Despite its title its description is restricted to the Quiraing for the most part, interspersing the description with the occasional excerpt from Nicolson's poem. What he does here is capture some of the romanticism espoused by travellers in this Gaelic account with its Classical allusion which also demonstrates his descriptive powers,

Chithear an sud agus an so sgoltan caol, dubh-ghagan dorcha, agus sgriochan
riobhagach, tana, a' gearradh agus a' breacadh gnais na carraige, agus 'g a fagail

⁵⁴ Derek Cooper, in *Road to the Isles* (Glasgow, 1979), p. 84, comments that 'the prescribed tourist route round Skye in the 1840s was limited to four main objects of curiosity: the Storr, the Quiraing, Spar Cave and Loch Coruisk'.

⁵⁵ James Hunter, *On the Other Side of Sorrow* (Edinburgh, 1995), p. 96.

⁵⁶ Clàr 237, p. 248.

⁵⁷ Clàr 103; 'An t-Eilean Sgiathanach', *An G.*, 42, 1875 pp. 167-8. For further discussion of MacGregor's article see Chapter Eight: Highland Folklore.

mar gu'm biodh i air a snaigheadh sìos le gilbìbh gear nan Ciclops, no le fàmhairibh alluidh, fiadhaich, le acfhuinnibh grabhadaireachd aca 'n an lamhaibh treun! Ann an aghaidh na craige moire sin, ma ta, tha comhnardan aillidh Chuithfhraing air fhòlachadh, agus air a chuairteachadh le dìon-bhallachaibh corrach a ta 'g eiridh suas 'n an colbhaibh arda chum nan neul.⁵⁸

Even here, MacGregor does not miss the opportunity of reminding his readers that this dramatic landscape is all proof of God's power and wisdom.

As this chapter demonstrates, Alexander MacGregor must have read fairly widely in English and kept abreast of some of the more recent scientific advances and intellectual trends outwith the Highlands. Rather than engaging in intellectual debate, he chose to pass on aspects of his own learning to his Gaelic readers, for many of whom such knowledge was unavailable, being confined to English language publications. This educative impulse manifests itself in his writing as he touches on many aspects of the natural world, in ways new to Gaelic literature. In these writings he combines secular and religious aims and reflects the close relationship which existed between science and religion for much of the nineteenth century. In providing instructive articles on the subjects dealt with by English language periodicals, he allowed Gaels to understand their environment more fully, with the added aim, albeit not explicitly stated, of dispelling ignorance and superstition.

⁵⁸ Clàr 103, p. 364.

CHAPTER 8

HIGHLAND FOLKLORE

Tha Coinneach Ciobair 'na dhuine gasda, tréibhdhireach, tuigseach, ach an déidh sin, feumar a shùilean fhosgladh gus am faic e na diomhrachdan sin mum bheil e aig a' cheart àm gu tur aineolach.¹

Coinneach Ciobair was a character developed by Alexander MacGregor to represent the average Gael - an upstanding, trustworthy character, but who stood in need of 'enlightenment' which his friend Murachadh provided in the course of their conversations. These two characters provided MacGregor with scope for discussing the customs and beliefs of the Gaels. This chapter focuses not so much on the actual beliefs themselves as on what MacGregor's writings reveal about his own attitudes to this aspect of Highland life, and the way in which he uses the dialogue as a means of expressing his own apparently contradictory attitudes.

Deborah Davis, in her study of the attitudes of nineteenth century ministers involved in the collection of Highland folklore, explores this issue of the relationship between popular belief and the Church, discussing the attitudes of the Highland clergy to 'supernatural folklore' in the later nineteenth century when the collection of folklore became very popular, not least amongst the clergy.² In this study she identifies four clear categories of minister in terms of their perceptions of this type of folklore - Antipathy, Morality, Hierophany and Scientific (Professional).³ She places Alexander MacGregor in the first category, describing his 'venomous attacks on Highland beliefs' and claiming that he 'deeply regrets the existence of such beliefs'.⁴ This assessment falls short of doing justice to MacGregor and his complex attitudes to 'superstition'. Deborah Davis seems to have looked no further than MacGregor's well-known publication *Highland Superstitions*.⁵ A study of MacGregor's writings in both Gaelic and English suggests that he is not as easily categorised as Davis would have her readers believe. It is undeniable that some of his writings on the Gaels'

¹ Clàr 80, p. 142.

² Deborah Davis, 'Contexts of Ambivalence: The Folkloristic Activities of Nineteenth Century Scottish Highland Ministers', *Folklore*, 103 ii (1992), 207- 21.

³ Ibid., p. 210.

⁴ Ibid., p. 211.

⁵ Clàr 263.

perception of the supernatural world contain an element of antipathy, particularly *Highland Superstitions*, but before judging him it is vital to look beyond this and to consider the many guises in which popular custom and belief appear in MacGregor's work. This chapter will take into account all MacGregor's known writings on custom and belief, comparing his presentation of folklore material with that of contemporary collectors in the field, and considering the specific uses to which he puts this folklore.

Highland Superstitions

One important issue which must be addressed first is that of the authorship of certain parts of *Highland Superstitions*, since of all his works in Gaelic or English, this is arguably MacGregor's best known. It should be stated from the outset that it is not the authorship of the entire book which is being called into question, but about one fifth of it, some twelve out of sixty pages. An early version of *Highland Superstitions* appeared under MacGregor's name in the *Celtic Magazine* during 1877 and 1878 as a series of three articles.⁶ Its next appearance was as an appendix to the second edition of Alexander MacKenzie's *The Prophecies of the Brahan Seer* in 1878, having been rewritten in places.⁷ It was this appendix which was then published in book form ten years after his death in 1891. Although the appendix and the book are entitled *Highland Superstitions* the articles were entitled 'Ancient Mythology and Modern Superstitions', a title which seems more appropriate given that a significant proportion of the articles, and therefore of the book too, was not in fact directly concerned with the beliefs of the Highlands, but with those of Ancient Greece and Rome, Scandinavia and the Lowlands of Scotland. Parts of the articles which were contributed to the *Celtic Magazine* had, however, been published almost forty years previously, although at no point does MacGregor make any reference to this fact. These had appeared under the title 'Sketches of Superstitions', in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* between 1839 and 1841.⁸ The series is anonymous, in keeping

⁶ Clàr 233-35.

⁷ Alexander MacKenzie, *The Prophecies of the Brahan Seer* (Inverness, 1878)

⁸ 'Sketches of Superstitions' *CEJ*, No. 407, 1839; No. 416, 1840; No. 420; No. 422; No. 423; No. 429; No. 432; No. 442; No. 449; No. 455; No. 457; No. 465; No. 466 1841; No. 476; No. 480; No. 483; No. 484; No. 492; No. 500; No. 505; No. 511; No. 517; No. 520.

with most of the writing published in the journal, and appeared in twenty-three parts, ranging from 'Greek Superstitions' and 'Witchcraft in Scotland' to 'Magi of the East' and 'Popular Fancies of the Pacific Islanders'. Compare the following parallel texts, the first in each instance being from *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, the second from MacGregor's *Highland Superstitions*:

Mankind have (*sic*) in all ages been prone to the most lamentable superstitions. The enlightened nations of antiquity were no more exempt from them than the most ignorant . . .⁹

It is lamentable that mankind in all ages of the world have been prone to the most degrading superstitions. The enlightened ages of antiquity were no more exempt from them than the most ignorant.¹⁰

Among the various supernatural beings to whom the ignorance and incredulity of mankind have given existence, the Fairies occupy a prominent place and are especially worthy of notice . . . In their palaces all was beauty and splendour. Their pageants and processions were far more magnificent than any that eastern sovereigns could get up or poets devise. They rode upon milk white steeds . . .¹¹

Among the various spiritual beings to whom the incredulity of mankind has given an imaginary existence, the fairies occupy a prominent place and are especially worthy of notice . . . In their palaces all was beauty and splendour. Their pageants and processions were far more magnificent than any that Eastern sovereigns could get up or poets devise. They rode upon milk white steeds . . .¹²

Approximately twelve of the sixty pages of text in *Highland Superstitions* are to be found, virtually *verbatim*, in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*. The question therefore, is: did MacGregor contribute these articles to the Edinburgh journal or did he use them as a foundation for his own articles?

It is stated in the journal that 'all the articles, not including pieces which require to be copied from books, are written, with very few exceptions by one or other of the conductors', the conductors being the Chambers brothers, William and Robert.¹³ Robert himself was very interested in folklore, having published *Traditions*

⁹ 'Sketches of Superstitions: Greek Superstitions', *CEJ*, 10 November 1839, p. 343.

¹⁰ Clàr 263, p. 13.

¹¹ 'Sketches of Superstitions: The Fairies of British Superstitions', *CEJ*, 18 April 1840, p. 103.

¹² Clàr 263, p. 20.

¹³ 'Mechanism of Chambers' Journal', *CEJ*, 6 June 1875, p. 149.

of *Edinburgh* (1824), *Popular Rhymes of Scotland* (1826), *Scottish Jests and Anecdotes* (1832) and later, *Book of Days* (1862-64).¹⁴ A search of the records of the journal's publishers does not shed much light on the question. Detailed ledgers listing publications and authors only begin in 1842, whereas the series in question had concluded the previous year. A search of manuscripts, letters and receipts for literary labours before 1842 in the archives of the publishers reveals no mention of Alexander MacGregor.¹⁵ Given that these earlier records are sparse compared with those of later years, this cannot be taken as proof that MacGregor did not contribute to *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* at this time. Equally there is no mention of any other writer having been paid for them. This archive evidence is therefore inconclusive.

There are a number of the topics within the 'Sketches' series which make no appearance elsewhere in any of MacGregor's writings, for example essays on the magi and the Pacific islanders. One possibility is that there was more than one contributor to the anonymous series, and that those by MacGregor are those which he draws upon in *Highland Superstitions*. On the other hand, given Robert Chambers' interest in folklore, he may have penned the entire series himself. In MacGregor's favour is the fact that when writing in English, at least, he tends to acknowledge the writing of others, as for instance in 'Highland and Island Scenery I & II' in which he acknowledges 'an eminent writer (Wilson)' and General Stewart of Garth. Indeed, in *Highland Superstitions* itself, he acknowledges, and quotes from, various different writers, as will be discussed later in the chapter. Weighing against this is the fact that when writing in Gaelic he clearly drew upon writings in English, to the extent that he translated texts almost word for word without acknowledging his source. One example of this has already been discussed in the context of emigration, namely MacGregor's use of John MacGregor's *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America*.¹⁶ Another instance is MacGregor's 'Sgeul

¹⁴ Richard M. Dorson, *The British Folklorists. A History* (London, 1968), pp. 122-37.

¹⁵ NLS, Dep. 341. Archives of Messrs W. and R. Chambers, Publishers, Edinburgh. Receipts for literary labours 1841-3; Notebook containing details of correspondence and transactions with authors and firms 1836-53; Manuscripts and accompanying letters to the editor of the Journal 1832-49, 1834-41, 1836-45, 1837-43.

¹⁶ See Chapter 5.

bheag mu theaghlach a chaidh air imrich do Chanada', published in *Cuairtear nan Gleann* in 1840. He does not claim that the story is his own, stating that he is relating it 'anns na ceart bhriathraibh an d'aithriseadh le duin'-uasal i', but neither does he reveal that it is in fact a translation of a tale by James Hogg (the Ettrick Shepherd) entitled 'Emigration' and printed in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* in 1833. Compare the beginning of the story in each case,

I know of nothing in the world so distressing as the last sight of a fine industrious peasantry taking the last look of their native country, never to behold it more. I have witnessed several of these scenes now, and I wish I may never witness another . . .¹⁷

'Cha'n aithne dhomh,' deir an duin'-uasal so, 'nì 'san t-saoghal nì's muladaiche na bhi 'faicinn sluaigh a bha riamh dichollach agus measail, a' fàgail na dùcha 'san d'rugadh iad, làn-chinnteach nach fhaic iad i tuille' a chaidh. Is minic a chunnaic mi iad a' deanamh sin, ach is sealladh e nach iarainn fhaicinn a ris!¹⁸

MacGregor clearly used the writings of others, and was inconsistent in his acknowledgement of these, more so with his writing in Gaelic than with those in English. Plagiarism, if that was in fact what MacGregor perpetrated, was not considered in the same light then as it is today. Under the heading 'plagiarism' *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* stated in 1845, 'he who reads much will find the ideas of others imperceptibly mingle with his own, and he will often use the former with the persuasion of their being his own'.¹⁹ MacGregor would probably have seen this as using what information was available to him in order to make it more readily available to Gaels. Based on the evidence available one cannot state conclusively whether or not it was MacGregor who contributed the original series to *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*. It may be that he contributed only some parts of the series, thus accounting for the sections on the magi and the Pacific islanders.

When reworking sections from the original series MacGregor frequently inserts his own observations or knowledge which add a Highland perspective. Writing on the Druids he mentions the belief that the Gaelic word for a meteor,

¹⁷ The Ettrick Shepherd, 'Emigration', *CEJ*, 18 May 1833, p. 124.

¹⁸ *Clàr* 3, p. 109.

¹⁹ 'Plagiarism', *CEJ*, 9 August 1845, p. 92.

dreug, is derived from the form *druidh-eug*, a Druid's death.²⁰ When discussing the fairies, in the midst of information drawn from *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, he supplies a grace which he attributes to a Farquhar Beaton in which protection is asked against the fairies.²¹ The writer had been personally acquainted with this Farquhar when he was a minister in Skye ('I knew an old man in Skye who died about thirty years ago'). Indeed it may have been in MacGregor's Kilmuir manse that the next story of Farquhar took place. Farquhar Beaton apparently had a 'superstitious dislike' of pork, and when dining at an unspecified manse ate pork believing it was mutton and praised it as 'an fheòil mhaith cheart'.²² Thus the material which had appeared in *Chambers'* has additional information grafted on to it. In fact it is worth stressing that the greatest part of *Highland Superstitions* - forty-eight of the sixty pages - is quite clearly MacGregor's own work, with numerous examples relating to Skye and the Highlands and the focus becoming more distinctively Highland, in marked contrast with the non-Highland focus of the essays in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*.

When Deborah Davis refers to his 'venomous' attacks on Highland beliefs and supports this with quotation, e.g. the fact that superstitious belief is 'lamentable', what she is in fact quoting is the writings from 1839 which may or may not be MacGregor's own work. That is not to say that these were not MacGregor's own opinions, and certainly he would not have used them had he not agreed with them. However, the fact that Davis is not aware of this doubt over the authorship of parts of *Highland Superstitions*, and her ignorance of his Gaelic writings and indeed other writings in English, demonstrate that her judgements were made without a view of the whole picture.

²⁰ Clàr 263, p. 19. The same 'explanation' is offered by the Rev. Alexander Stewart (Nether Lochaber) in *Twixt Ben Nevis and Glencoe* (Edinburgh, 1885), p. 291.

²¹ Clàr 262, p. 23. This same grace appeared earlier in MacGregor's writing, in one of the dialogues between Murachadh Bàn and Coinneach Ciobair, Clàr 89, p. 276. In this the recitor is merely referred to as 'seann duine coir anns an Eilean Sgiathanach air an robh Fearchar'.

²² Clàr 263, p. 25

MacGregor's sources

MacGregor's access to popular belief would have been restricted to some extent by his position within the Church. John Francis Campbell expressed 'fear that the people will not confide their superstitions to the minister' in a letter to the prominent nineteenth century collector the Rev. John Gregorson Campbell.²³ Yet the case for the dog-collar as a barrier to accessing the popular beliefs of the Gael should not be over-stated. As Davis's article reminds us, many ministers were very successful in collecting folklore at the time MacGregor was writing, ministers such as Campbell, Free Church minister of Tiree and Coll, the Rev. James MacDougall of Duror and the Rev. Duncan MacInnes of Cromdale. Yet MacGregor's account of Highland superstitions does not suggest that he himself was an active collector who was going amongst his parishioners actively seeking out instances of their beliefs. For the most part his information seems to have been gleaned from sources other than those who actively believed in the supernatural and in popular customs, such as other writers and colleagues. He quotes General David Stewart of Garth's *Sketches of the Highlanders* on an instance of second sight;²⁴ from Hugh Miller's *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland* he relates the story of the Fiddler's Well near Cromarty;²⁵ he quotes the *Statistical Account* of Iona regarding popular lore of St. Columba.²⁶ A number of his examples concern ministers, particularly Skye ministers, and their experiences of second sight or the fairies, this being the sort of information which he would have acquired quite readily when living in Skye - where his father had been a minister from 1822. Occasionally the book contains examples such as that of Farquhar Beaton where MacGregor himself had some personal experience of people's belief. In his section entitled 'smaller superstitions' he tells how when he was performing a baptism an old woman in the congregation stopped him from using the same water to baptise a girl as he had used for a boy, lest she grow up with a beard.²⁷

²³ John Gregorson Campbell, *Clan Traditions and Popular Tales of the Western Highlands and Islands* (London, 1895), p. 148.

²⁴ Clàr 263, p. 35.

²⁵ Clàr 263, pp. 67-69.

²⁶ Clàr 263, pp. 40-41.

²⁷ Clàr 263, p. 46. This belief is also attested by the Reverend Walter Gregor in the North-East in the 1870s, see Margaret Bennett, *Scottish Customs from the Cradle to the Grave* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 55-56.

Compared with many of his contemporaries, MacGregor's experience of folklore would have been limited by position as a son of the manse. Although his interest in the customs and beliefs of his fellow Gaels may have been strong, his exposure to it would have been far less than had he been brought up in a crofter's or fisherman's home. Thus his knowledge is often second-hand, or at least reported as though second-hand. This, when considered in the light of the use he made of 'Sketches of Superstitions', may help to account for the disparate elements which make up *Highland Superstitions*. It may also be that his position, socially removed from his people, motivated him to learn about and understand them better.

Alexander MacGregor had two views on 'superstition'. He thought it reprehensible that the Gaels should believe in a supernatural world of their own instead of devoting their full attention to God, yet he also associated it with a sense of loss arising from massive social change in the nineteenth century,

But these olden times are gone, and the remnants of their practices and peculiarities will speedily disappear. In one sense, no doubt, the people are now-a-days more beneficially employed than their forefathers may have been, yet on the other hand the change in the habits of that primitive people is a subject of regret on various grounds. The traditions of a country (the only source of information concerning bygone days in the absence of written records) are always interesting and instructive, and it is to be lamented that the traditions of the Highlands have been to a great degree irrecoverably lost.²⁸

The tension expressed here between progress and preservation was one which found release in the great upsurge of folklore activity in the later nineteenth century. It is almost exclusively in MacGregor's later work (i.e. 1872-81) that this tension appears, and it is through considering his response to this tension that we can gauge his true attitude to 'superstitions'. This excerpt also raises the question as to whether Davis's reference to MacGregor's 'venomous attacks' on folklore can be in any way justified.

Nineteenth century Gaelic poetry, with its eye to the past, has been condemned on account of its general failure to take issue with the present and, in the

²⁸ Clàr 208, p. 4.

words of Sorley MacLean, its 'weak, half romantic nostalgia'.²⁹ Indeed the same response to social change can often be seen in Gaelic prose of the same period with writers as often looking back in time for their inspiration as they did to the present or future. MacGregor, however seems to have succeeded in accommodating past, present and future. Fred Davis, in *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* describes as 'a marvel of rational condensation' the process whereby one 'manages at one and the same time to celebrate the past, to diminish it, and to transmute it into a means for engaging the present'.³⁰ It is exactly this which MacGregor does - he celebrates folk custom and belief as part of the past and can appreciate it as such. At the same time, however, the opposition which he sees between these beliefs and those of the church requires him to undermine it as a form of belief acceptable at the time he was writing. In employing 'superstition' to engage the present he draws upon it as a literary device in dialogues and in descriptive prose. The next part of this discussion will centre on these three stages of the nostalgic process.

'Celebrating and diminishing the past'

Murachadh, the sceptical character from MacGregor's series of dialogues in *An Gaidheal*, says of popular beliefs,

Ged nach 'eil a-rèir mo bheachd-sa, brìgh, no blagh no tairbhe annta fhèin . . .
tha iad freagarrach chum eòlas a thoirt seachad air gnàthannaibh,
cleachdannaibh, agus saobh-chrabhadh ar luchd-dùthcha fhéin anns na linntibh
a dh'fhalbh; oir bithidh beachd nas fheàrr againn air beannachdan an t-solais
mur as mò ar n-eòlas air duibhre agus cianalas an dorchadais.³¹

This encapsulates MacGregor's dual perspective on popular Highland beliefs, and shows how he could succinctly denounce the ways of the past, while in the next breath paying homage to them. Indeed, the dialogues in which 'superstition' is discussed provide the most revealing evidence regarding his own attitudes. Coinneach is very knowledgeable about popular beliefs and customs, and certainly believes in some of them. Murachadh, on the other hand, is highly sceptical and

²⁹ Sorley MacLean, 'Realism in Gaelic Poetry' in *Ris a' Bhruthaich* ed. by William Gillies (Stornoway, 1985), pp. 15-47 (44).

³⁰ Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York, 1979), p. 45.

³¹ Clàr 89, p. 276.

indeed often ridicules his friend for his beliefs, but nonetheless acknowledges that the subject is an interesting one. He shows the acceptable side of folklore, being motivated by curiosity and the desire to further his own understanding of his own people. It is hard to believe that MacGregor would have devoted such a sizeable part of his writing to superstition, and considered it in such detail, had his sole motive been to condemn it. The antiquarian in him found these beliefs too interesting to ignore, and the minister in him then felt obliged to rebuke those who actually subscribed to them. The same holds true for his interest in the historical tales of the Gaels. In *Cuairtear nan Gleann, Fear-Tathaich nam Beann* and *An Gaidheal* he relates the tales of various clan feuds of the past before concluding on the common point,

Bha na h-amanna sin searbh agus garbh, ach chaidh iad seachad. Uime sin, biodh uile luchd-leughaidh a' Ghaidheil, agus muinntir na tìre gu léir, taingeil don Uile-chumhachdach, nach eil eòlas aca air na h-amannaibh sin, ach amhàin ann an iomradh, agus ann an eachdraidh.³²

Similar sentiments were expressed by Norman MacLeod when writing of folklore, 'tha na nithean sin uile air dol 'an di-chuimhn', agus is maith gu-m bheil: oir ma tha cuimhne orra, 's ann mar nithean iongantach a chaidh seachad, agus a tha air an cumail air chuimhne mar shoilleireachadh air cleachdaidhean na h-aimsir a dh'-fhalbh'.³³

In the obituary which appeared for Alexander MacGregor in the *Celtic Magazine* he is described as 'our best Gaelic scholar, and the first authority upon all questions connected with the history, antiquities, traditions, language and literature of his countrymen'.³⁴ Even after allowing for the demands of his position in the clergy it remains clear that MacGregor was highly regarded as an expert on Highland lore. His apparent antipathy towards the past and its customs, which tended to emerge again and again in his closing paragraphs, may in fact be best explained as a defence against any critics who might suggest that a minister's attentions should be more concerned with religious matters - a criticism which would have been a

³² Clàr 96, p. 240.

³³ A. Clerk ed., *Caraid nan Gaidheal* (Edinburgh, 1899), p. 338.

³⁴ A[lexander] M[acKenzie], 'The Reverend Alexander MacGregor, M. A.' *CM*, 74 (1881), 95.

common Free Church point of view on the activities of Moderate ministers. No such criticism against MacGregor seems to survive, but nonetheless it is a point about which he may have been sensitive; thus his inclusion of references to the improvement which the Word of God has brought about in the people, helping him justify his interest to potential critics. In fact, his concluding remarks in most of these essays could be classed as highly formulaic, reiterating the same message as in the following conclusion to 'Mortadh Iain Stiùbhairt, Morair Lathuirne', published in *Cuairtear nan Gleann*

Tha e gu cinnteach dligheach dhuinne buidheachas a thoirt Dàsan a ta 'riaghladh os ar ceann, do bhrìgh gun do rùnaich e, 'na fhreasdal fhéin ar crannchur a thilgeadh ann an dùthaich agus ann an linn far am bheil sinn fhéin agus ar cuid tèaruinte, agus far am bheil laghanna teann agus cothromach 'gar dìonadh o gach dochann agus sgrios a dh'fheudadh naimhdean a dhèanamh oirnn.³⁵

MacGregor constantly diminishes the past by playing down the prevalence of popular belief in the nineteenth century, with such observations as, 'the press and the pulpit have now opened the eyes of men; the schoolmaster is abroad; and many superstitions by which past ages have been deluded have greatly vanished before the pure light of evangelic truth'.³⁶ That MacGregor himself was part of this process is demonstrated by his writings on the natural world.³⁷ This denial that superstitious beliefs were still prevalent is echoed by a number of the Highland ministers who contributed to the *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, as did MacGregor himself. The celebrated evangelical, the Rev. John MacDonald of Urquhart and Logie-Wester, also known as the 'Apostle of the North', reported that 'such silly ideas have vanished before the enlightening influence of Christian education'.³⁸ The account of the parish of Kilmorack (Dingwall) asserts that 'in many of the western parts of the country, the march of improvement has been very slow, and the strongholds of superstition are not yet demolished'.³⁹ The Rev. Donald McRae of Gairloch was also confident that the popular beliefs of the Gaels were all but extirpated, stating, 'the belief in such

³⁵ Clàr 25, p. 113.

³⁶ Clàr 263, p. 71.

³⁷ See Chapter 7.

³⁸ *NSA*, vol. 14, p. 368.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

absurdities is daily losing ground in the Highlands; and there is little doubt that in the course of a few years more, the clouds of superstition that overhang the moral horizon of our Highlands will be dissipated by the better education of the peasantry'.⁴⁰

These constant claims that popular beliefs were on the brink of disappearing completely may be more wishful thinking than they were reality, since the Church would naturally wish to promote the idea that non-Christian beliefs were receding as a result of its work. Ministers would want to believe that this was the case, and were in a position where they could easily avoid hearing about such practices. By dismissing popular beliefs in such a way the clergy were weakening or deactivating them by representing them as a peripheral rather than a central part of Highland life. If MacGregor could see 'superstitions' as remnants of the past or of a rapidly vanishing present then they were effectively a safe subject since they no longer posed a threat. That the Highlanders' beliefs held a fascination for him is clear. Numerous examples exist from the period of 'superstition' in association with crime and deception. *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* reports of a woman on trial for witchcraft in Inverness in 1843 who was jailed for three months for swindling people. The report concludes, 'the judge remarked on the extraordinary circumstance that so absurd a superstition should still linger among the people in these days of intelligence and information'.⁴¹ This captures the atmosphere of improvement which was promoted by the media in the nineteenth century. It also demonstrates that contemporary newspapers would have provided MacGregor with all the necessary ammunition to demonstrate how criminals would play on people's beliefs. Yet Gaels' beliefs are not tarnished with such associations in his writings.

Indeed in the last dialogue published before his death, there is a suggestion that popular beliefs were not quite as 'lamentable' as he had often concluded. During a conversation about Roman gods, Murachadh Ban said of the Romans,

Bha iad le 'n uile cridhe a' cur an dochais anns an dia-bréige seo, agus tha eagal orm gun robh iad a' dèanamh sin air mhodh nas tréibhdhìrich na tha móran 'nar

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 92.

⁴¹ *CEJ*, 29 January 1844, pp. 42-43.

measg fhéin a' creidsinn anns an Dia bheò agus fhìor, a dhealbh na h-uile nithe le focal a chumhachd fhéin . . .⁴²

It may be that the temporal distance from the Roman period had made this a safe statement, or it may be that this was more acceptable to MacGregor by virtue of being Roman and hence 'Classical'. Clearly, MacGregor sees the capacity to have a strong faith in something, albeit in pagan gods, to be praiseworthy, a capacity which he seems to feel is somewhat lacking amongst his contemporaries. A similar view was expressed by fellow Established Church minister, the Rev. Alexander Stewart (Nether Lochaber) whose columns in the *Inverness Courier* were collected in two volumes, *Nether Lochaber: The Natural History, Legends and Folklore of the West Highlands*⁴³ and *'Twixt Ben Nevis and Glencoe*.⁴⁴ Stewart echoes Thomas Aquinas' definition of superstition as 'religion taken to extremes', claiming that over-belief was preferable to a lack of belief. He observes that 'a man with any form of creed, even if it be false, may be led in time to believe aright, whereas the case of the utterly creedless man is well-nigh hopeless.'⁴⁵

Stewart also believed that there was some merit in 'superstition' in that it heightened awareness of the shortness and uncertainty of human life.⁴⁶ In a similar vein, Mrs Anne Grant of Laggan, a minister's widow, whose *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland* was published in 1811, observed that 'the belief in spectral appearances had upon the whole a good moral tendency', such as reducing the occurrence of murders.⁴⁷ MacGregor fails to make any further mention of popular belief as a power for good, yet that one statement from Murachadh Ban might have changed Deborah Davis's assessment of MacGregor. Again it seems that MacGregor's feelings of constraint imposed by his social position may have been the main limiting factor in his discussions of popular belief and in preventing him from becoming an active fieldworker in folklore. It is most likely that he would have felt it inappropriate that he should demonstrate merits in a system of

⁴² Clàr 205, p. 57.

⁴³ (Edinburgh, 1883).

⁴⁴ (Edinburgh, 1885).

⁴⁵ *Nether Lochaber*, p. 313.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

⁴⁷ (London, 1811), p. 162.

beliefs which had not been as thoroughly eradicated as many ministers claimed it had been.

'Engaging the Present'

Alexander MacGregor's discussions of popular Highland belief had a contemporary perspective rather than being purely retrospective, employing it as a topic which gave him scope to provide practical education in Gaelic. Incorporating the beliefs of the Gaels into some of his dialogues, he used discussion of them to provide insights into hygiene and medicine. In one, 'Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair', the conversation touches on the power of the evil eye (An Droch Shùil) and the efficacy of charms as an antidote for its effects. Coinneach tells of one Ealasaid Nighean Raonaill whose cows failed to produce milk, for which she blamed the evil eye. Murachadh, who speaks with the sceptical voice of MacGregor, instructs Coinneach,

Thoir thusa beannachd uamsa gu Ealasaid Nighean Raonaill agus innis di a bhith cinnteach 'san aimsir bhlàth so, gun sgallt i na measraichean agus na soithichean bainne le h-uisge goileach gach madainn agus feasgar; agus gun cum i na mairt-bhainne gun a bhith 'ruith air theas, mar gum biodh an cuthach orra, agus gun gnàthaich i uisge fuar an tobair ann am pailteas, chum gach cùil, oisinn agus sgeilp mun taigh-bhainne, fhàgail fuar, fionnar, agus glan.⁴⁸

The aim is two-fold - to discredit the belief in the Evil Eye and to convey practical advice to readers about the implications which poor hygiene and poor care of cows have for the production of milk. MacGregor's instruction is far from heavy handed and ends on the dismissive, but amusing remark, 'agus ma nì ise sin, creid thusa mise, nach bi aobhar tuilleadh aice air fios a chur air Donnchadh Glas,⁴⁹ no Geal, no air feum a chur air aon seun no giseag a bhuineas da'.⁵⁰

A second instance of MacGregor using traditional Highland belief as a means of demonstrating that there may be a better course of action, arises in a later conversation between the two friends in which they mention many of the unlucky actions and omens which are listed under 'Smaller Superstitions' in *Highland*

⁴⁸ Clàr 89, p. 275.

⁴⁹ Donnchadh Glas was the man whom Coinneach reported had brought back the milk with charms.

⁵⁰ Clàr 89, p. 275.

Superstitions. One of these is that should one break one's leg, it is not to a physician, but to a smith that one should go to have it set, since physicians were not believed to be proficient in that art. No further comment is offered in *Highland Superstitions*, but in the Gaelic dialogue, after Coinneach reminds Murachadh of this custom, Murachadh relates the experience of one who did just that,

An uair a bhris Callum Bàn Mac Uilleim Mhic Sheumais a chas an uiridh aig Coire-nan-eilid, ged a bha an Léigh MacMhuirich 'san ath thaigh aig an ám, cha leigeadh iad leis meur a chur air Callum, ach chuireadh fios gun dàil air Fearchar Gobha dh'ionnsaidh na ceardaich, thàinig e, agus cheangal e suas a' chos, ach ma cheangal, tha i cho crom an diugh ri bùlas na poite, agus cha bhi i ceart aige gu bràth. Ach is mór a nì an t-aineolas, agus is minic tha an t-aineolas an dà chuid dall agus dàn.⁵¹

On each occasion MacGregor did not stop at listing popular beliefs, but provided a fictional victim so that the belief and the proof of its erroneous basis could be discussed in a less abstract way, and equally importantly, not from the pulpit, but from the mouth of an ordinary Gael, albeit a fictional one. Alexander Stewart considered the question of how the clergy could best address 'superstition' and concluded that whether you attempt to drive it out by force, laugh at it or sneer at it, the end result will be as he himself found, that it is 'by no means the weaker of your assaults, no matter how cautiously you select to deal with it'.⁵² MacGregor chose to discuss superstitious belief in tandem with providing his Gaelic readership with practical advice, and rather than merely condemning them, he attempted to demonstrate by example that they were misplaced. As the previous chapter has shown, MacGregor was very well aware of the scientific advances being made in the nineteenth century, and in the two dialogues already discussed above, the two meet. James Napier, in his *Folklore: or Superstitious Beliefs in the West of Scotland*, stated that unless a knowledge of physical science were made a religious duty these beliefs would not be readily displaced.⁵³ This is implicit in the two examples given from Alexander MacGregor's *comhraidhean*. The old world and its traditions are displaced

⁵¹ Clàr 94, p. 180.

⁵² *Nether Lochaber*, pp. 315 and 318.

⁵³ (Paisley, 1879), p. 15.

by a new and pragmatic world in the encounter between Coinneach and Murachadh, with Coinneach biased towards the former and Murachadh to the latter.

In the context of these same dialogues between Murachadh and Coinneach, MacGregor found another way of employing the Gaels' beliefs, this time as a literary device. Once the pair had become established characters and the readers would have been familiar with their different outlooks MacGregor was able to exploit this to provide humour. One dialogue concludes with Murachadh wryly saying 'Rachamaid dhachaidh air eagal gun saoil Seonaid gun d'fhalbh na sìthichean leinn'.⁵⁴ In another Murachadh exclaims, 'A Choinnich, ciod a thainig ort o cheann mìos no dhà! Bha eagal orm gun d'fhalbh do chàirdean na sìthichean leat'.⁵⁵ Another begins with similar banter:

Mur. - . . . Ciod a ghluais thu cho moch as do leabaidh an déidh do choiseachd móire, agus do sgios gun teagamh air an là 'n dé? Tha mi an dòchas nach do dhùisg na sìthichean thu, agus nach d'fhàinig taibhse no tannasg, bodach no bocan 'nad char ré na h-oidhche, chum dragh no dorran a chur ort, a charaid.

Coin. - Ochan! a Mhurchaidh, chan fhurasd a' chromag a thoirt as an t-seann mhaide! Gu dearbh bu dàn a' ghruagach, no, 'n t-sithich' a thigeadh 'nad charsa, aig a bheil fuath cho mór dan taobh . . .⁵⁶

The humour is entertaining, but at the same time, invites the reader to laugh with Murachadh at any genuine belief in such supernatural beings.

Another example of MacGregor drawing on the fairies as a literary tool, although to a different end, is to be found in his description of Skye in 'An t-Eilean Sgitheanach', published in 1875 in *An Gaidheal*. The great fondness which he felt for his adopted island pervades much of his work, but nowhere more so than when he is appreciating its scenery, whether in Gaelic or English. In this particular piece he uses a reference to the fairies to give the Quiraing an air of romantic mystery, but with an escape clause,

Nam biodh Coinneach Cìobair ann an sin, bheireadh e a bhóid gur iad na sìthichean a dh'uallaich an t-àite neònach so mar thuineachas dhoibh fhéin, oir tha e cosmhuil ri ionad-comhnaidh nan leannan-sithe. Chithear barr-mhullach

⁵⁴ Clàr 80, p. 142.

⁵⁵ Clàr 93, p. 102.

⁵⁶ Clàr 95, p. 210.

nan stuc ceithir-timchioll, a casadh gu greannach suas, ach tha gach stuc air a bhonn fhéin a' seasamh mar fhreiceadan air ceann àrd na slighe.⁵⁷

The example above demonstrates the minister in him exercising restraint. This forbidding picture gains much from the brief allusion to the fairies, but MacGregor, ever careful, attributed the thought to Coinneach Ciobair lest he himself be seen to be condoning such a fanciful description. He is a little more reticent when writing in English of Skye's scenery, making no reference to the fairies of the Quiraing in his two part article 'Highland and Island Scenery', published in the *Celtic Magazine* in 1879.⁵⁸ The only mention of the supernatural world is the reference to 'the fairy scene of Loch-coir-Uisge'.⁵⁹ MacGregor was clearly not so averse to popular beliefs that he would not put them to use in his writing when he felt they were appropriate.

This leads into the whole issue of MacGregor and the intellectual environment of the time in which he was writing. His interest in Highland folklore, as mentioned previously, was most apparent in the later stage period of his work, but the interest was there, nonetheless, in his writings of 1840-1850, in the pre-*Popular Tales of the West Highlands* era. 'Creach eadar Fhineacha Gaidhealach' was published in 1841 in *Cuairtear nan Gleann*.⁶⁰ In the same periodical 'Air Seana Chleachd Sgiathanach', concerning the 'each-ursainn', was published⁶¹ and also the historical tale 'Mortadh Iain Stiùbhairt Morair Lathuirne'.⁶² Alexander MacGregor was not writing in a purely Gaelic environment, but was open to external influences, as his use of *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* has already demonstrated. In terms of the contemporary folklore scene in the Highlands, his presentation of material differs

⁵⁷ Clàr 103, p. 364.

⁵⁸ Clàr 237 & 238.

⁵⁹ Clàr 238, p. 286.

⁶⁰ Clàr 7.

⁶¹ Clàr 21. Also known as *damh ursainn* or *bó ursainn*, the practice of the *each-ursainn* involved a landlord, on the death of a tenant, taking the man's best horse, ox or cow. In this tale from Skye a bailiff attacked a widow who would not give up her late husband's horse. Eighteen years later her son gets his revenge by killing the bailiff, for which the landlord forgives him. This same Skye tale is related by J. G. Mackay in 'Social Life in Skye from Legend and Story' in *TGSI*, 29 (1914-19), 335-50 (pp. 338-39). Mackay observes that this custom is known as the Heriot Horse in the Lowlands and in England. See also Ronald Black 'Colla Ciotach' *TGSI*, 48 (1972-74), 201-43, (p. 215); The Rev. Alexander Macrae ed., *Mary Macpherson, Bean Torra Dhamh: Her Poems and Life* (Glasgow, n.d.), pp. 29 and 55. This custom was abolished by an Act of Parliament in 1617.

⁶² Clàr 25.

significantly from that of John Francis Campbell, the Rev. John Gregorson Campbell and Alexander Carmichael, the three most prominent collectors in the nineteenth century. These men clearly had different agendas. John Francis Campbell of Islay, whose *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* was published in four volumes between 1860 and 1862, was interested in folk tales from a scientific and antiquarian point of view and was heavily influenced by the work of the Grimm brothers. He saw his collection as 'a contribution to this new science of "Storyology"'.⁶³ His books contained the tales unaltered from the forms in which his collectors had recorded them from informants. John Gregorson Campbell's methods were similar to those of Campbell of Islay, being 'to put down what he heard, to comment upon what he found'.⁶⁴ Carmichael, on the other hand, was somewhat more sentimental in his treatment of Gaelic folklore. Motivated by a desire to elevate the Gael in the eyes of the non-Gaelic world, it has been suggested by Hamish Robertson that the charms, blessings and invocations which Carmichael collected throughout the Highlands were not in fact always presented as he heard them. Robertson has argued that Carmichael often changed texts, substituting words, generally in favour of using archaic forms, adding new lines and changing the order of verses, in order to present the material in what he perceived to be the best possible light.⁶⁵ In response to this article, John Lorne Campbell has suggested that Carmichael saw it as his duty to restore corrupt forms to their original splendour, and that much of the first three volumes of *Carmina Gadelica* should 'be taken as a literary and not as a literal presentation of Gaelic folklore'.⁶⁶

MacGregor's presentation of folklore material is different, in that he neither presented it as heard, nor did he improve it so as to present a favourable image of the Gael. Instead he used it to suit his own needs. As a fossilised part of his native culture he seems to have felt comfortable with it, listing popular beliefs and relating tales of a heroic past. As such it had an intrinsic value in reaffirming the Gaels'

⁶³ J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* Vol. I (Edinburgh, 1860; new ed. Edinburgh, 1994), p. 2.

⁶⁴ *Clan Traditions*, p. xvi.

⁶⁵ 'Studies in Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*', *SGS*, 12 Pt 2 (1976), 220-265 (p. 224).

⁶⁶ 'Notes on Hamish Robertson's "Studies in Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*"', *SGS*, 13 Pt I (1978) 1-15 (p.13).

identity as a race apart without endangering the Victorian's sense of moral and intellectual superiority. MacGregor certainly drew upon the past as a demonstration of the progress which Highland society had undergone. The historical tales, entertaining in themselves, show how the Gaels had escaped a lawless, barbarous age to reach their current state of civilisation and as already mentioned, MacGregor was not slow to remind them of this at the conclusion of the tales. When discussing witchcraft, he borrowed heavily from the series 'Sketches of Superstitions' in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, and it is interesting that this piece on witchcraft is the only borrowing from there which he carried over into his Gaelic work. Again it is on the sense of progress and improvement that he focused in what is more or less a translation of part of the original 1840s series, although the criticism would have been strong by Victorian standards.

Dhìteadh iad [na buidsichean] airson cionta nach b'urrainn a bhith ann. Agus có a dhìteadh? Iadsan, mar bu trice, a bha aosda, - bacaich, crioplaich, agus doill, - iadsan a ghreasadh le bliadhnaichean agus aois gu bochdainn 's gu truaighe . . . agus có a dhìt iad? Iadsan a bha mór, measail, glic, foghlaimte, agus urramach 'nan là a's 'nan linn fhéin. Daoine a bha comharraichte thar chàch airson an tuigse, agus am buaidhean inntinn, - rìghrean, prionnsaichean, maithean na tìre, - luchd-lagha, - ministeirean an t-soisgeil, - agus luchd-riaghlaidh de gach gnè!
 ...⁶⁷

In the same vein are his articles 'Adhlaicean ann an China' and 'Saobh-chrabhadh anns na h-Innsibh' in which he touches on some of the customs and beliefs of these countries. The body of the text on funerals in China, for instance, is given over to a factual, non-judgemental account of customs and beliefs associated with death. It is only in the final paragraph that we are reminded of how grateful Gaels should be, this time on account of their geographical location, rather than because of the era in which they are living. This also underlines one of the main motivating factors behind the missionary movement of the nineteenth century.

Is muladach a bhi 'smuaineachadh air saobh-chrabhadh cho cianail ri so; agus tha e 'n a aobhar taingeileachd dhuinne, gu'n do thilg an Tì a's airde ar crannchur ann an tìr far am bheil solus Greine na Fireantachd a' fogradh an tiugh dhorchadas sin air falbh, agus far am bheil beatha agus neo-bhasmhorachd air an toirt chum soluis le Soisgeul siorruidh na sìthe.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Clàr 93, p. 105.

⁶⁸ Clàr 72, p. 333.

MacGregor's readers are being invited to feel a sense of superiority, being part of a progressive society no longer afflicted by such superstitious beliefs, rather than living in an unenlightened society.

The Victorian sense of 'progress' and 'improvement' is fundamental to an understanding of Alexander MacGregor's attitude to Highland tradition. As was shown in the previous chapter, he had a very strong awareness of scientific progress in the course of the nineteenth century and indeed seems to have embraced these advances which appeared to unravel the world's mysteries. Yet the speed at which many aspects of Victorian life were changing was an inevitable part of this 'progress' and left a general feeling of uncertainty and instability. The Highlands, with the immense social upheaval which they underwent in the nineteenth century, were more susceptible to these sentiments than less 'peripheral', English speaking areas of the country. Robert Hewison, in *The Heritage Industry*, has observed that 'continuity between past and present creates a sense of sequence out of aleatory chaos and since change is inevitable, a stable system of ordered meanings enables us to cope with both innovation and decay'.⁶⁹ Proclaiming progress and enlightenment was not MacGregor's sole purpose in writing about popular custom and belief. Both for himself and his readers, the backward glance in the face of increasing technological advances served to reaffirm their sense of identity.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ (London, 1987), p.47.

⁷⁰ See Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 9

PROVERBS AND MORAL TALES

The Victorian era is regarded, more than any other, as a period in which much emphasis was placed upon morality. This manifests itself in Alexander MacGregor's writings in two particular forms, namely proverbs and moral tales. In this chapter consideration will be given to these two distinct areas, in the context of both Gaelic oral culture and of Victorian Britain. Appendix 4 contains an alphabetical list of the proverbs which occur in MacGregor's writings and all proverbs quoted from his work in the course of this chapter can be found listed there, rather than in the footnotes, in the interest of keeping footnotes brief.

Proverbs

In MacGregor's second phase of writing (1870-81), with his adoption of the colloquial dialogue, his interest in Gaelic proverbs becomes apparent. The later nineteenth century was a period which saw Gaelic scholars' attention increasingly attracted not only towards language and folk-tale, but to the proverb, and it is in this environment, of the Gaelic proverb's heightened profile, that this chapter will discuss MacGregor's use of it.

It should, however, be borne in mind that the collection of Gaelic proverbs was not merely a nineteenth century phenomenon. In 1785 the Rev. Donald Mackintosh's collection of proverbs, which would be republished in expanded form in 1881, appeared in print.¹ There also survives in manuscript form a collection made by James Macintyre (1783-1835) from Balquhiddy, some of which he contributed to *An Teachdaire Gaelach* in 1829, and William MacMurchy's eighteenth century collection (published in *Reliquiae Celticae* in 1892).² In the later part of the nineteenth century the collection of proverbs gathered pace, and saw Alexander Nicolson's publication of *Gaelic Proverbs*, an extended version of Mackintosh's collection.³ At the forefront of this activity were members of the clergy, such as the

¹ Donald Mackintosh, *A Collection of Gaelic Proverbs and Familiar Phrases* (Edinburgh, 1785).

² MS 1832, pp. 177-87, National Library of Scotland. This collection is discussed in Ronald Black, 'James Macintyre's Calendar', *SGS*, 17 (1996), 36-60.

³ Alexander Nicolson, *Gaelic Proverbs* (Edinburgh, 1881; rev. by Malcolm MacInnes, Glasgow, 1951).

Rev. John Gregorson Campbell and the Rev. Dr. Alexander Cameron, Brodick.⁴ Contributions of Gaelic proverbs appeared in both *An Gaidheal* and the *Highlander*, as well as in various other contemporary publications. Equally notable, and perhaps another of the stimuli to the collection movement, was a series of twelve essays which appeared in *An Gaidheal* in 1875 on Gaelic proverbs by Donald MacKinnon, who was to be appointed to the newly created Chair of Celtic at the University of Edinburgh in 1882.⁵ The impetus behind this upsurge of interest in the proverb seems to have been twofold. Just as folk-tales were being gathered in this period, so too a conscious effort was being made to collect proverbs. This was motivated partially, as with other aspects of folklore, by the desire to preserve those remnants which remained of, what appeared to be, a language and culture on its death bed. MacGregor's writing testifies, however, to the existence of another important factor. In a dialogue in 1878 Coinneach Ciobair asserts,

Is iongantach àireamh firinn agus freagarrachd nan Gnàth-fhocail sin a dhealbhadh agus a chleachdadh le'r ceud sinnsearaihbh. Tha iad a' dearbhadh gun robh geur-bheachd, tuigse agus gliocas 'nam measg ann an tomhas mór, oir cha b'urrainn sluagh gu tur aineolach nithe mar a cho-dhealbhadh agus briathraibh co cothromach a chur ann an altaibh a chèile.⁶

This attitude is characteristic of the later nineteenth century academic interest in Gaelic proverbs, namely that the inherent wisdom displayed in the sayings demonstrated the wisdom and perception of the race. Donald Ross, in a paper read to the Gaelic Society of Inverness two years before MacGregor's dialogue appeared in the *Highlander*, says of the Gael that 'he was not in any sense a *Yahoo*, even although the practical moral code of this century endorses a central doctrine on his shifting one'.⁷ The same sentiment is expressed by Sheriff Nicolson in his preface to *Gaelic Proverbs* when he writes that they 'reflect a high moral standard, an intelligence shrewd and searching, a singular sense of propriety and grace and what may be considered one of the tests of intellectual rank and culture, a distinct sense of humour

⁴ Donald E. Meek, *The Campbell Collection of Gaelic Proverbs and Proverbial Sayings* (Inverness, 1978), pp. xv-xx.

⁵ These essays were republished in Lachlan MacKinnon, *Prose Writings of Donald MacKinnon* (Edinburgh, 1956).

⁶ Clàr 187, p. 3.

⁷ Donald Ross, 'The Cosmos of the Ancient Gaels in its Relation to their ethics Part 1', *TGSI*, 6 (1876-1877), 120-48 (p. 147).

never found among savages or clodhopper'.⁸ Donald MacKinnon, in his series of essays, discusses the influence of proverbs on the Gaels and the value of such sayings. He too perceives them as a means of elevating the Gael in the eyes of his critics, saying, 'Tha mi meas gu bheil na seanfhocail Ghaidhealach 'nam fianais cho urramach air gliocas gleusdachd 's deagh bheus ar n-athraichean is a tha iad air maise is air neart na Gàidhlig'.⁹ To this he adds Biblical weight by observing that were Solomon, renowned for his proverbs and wisdom, alive, hardly anywhere could suit him better than the Highlands and Gaelic.¹⁰ Indeed, in MacKinnon's first essay on the subject, entitled 'Ciod iad?' he elevates the Gaels further by association with Greeks and Romans as well as with Solomon.¹¹ Proverbs provided such scholars with the means to vindicate the beleaguered Gael who, if not being viewed by the external world as a romantic vestige of a bygone day, was seen as an ignorant backward savage. Proverbs demonstrated a high degree of development, contradicting this latter picture, and conveying the wisdom, morals, character and wit of the Gael.

This increased cultural awareness, with its desire to defend and promote the Gael, will be discussed further in the following chapter, which considers MacGregor's attitude to Gaelic. In the context of proverbs and folklore, however, it is worth mentioning one other contemporary figure whose work is characterised by this same desire to vindicate the Gael, namely Alexander Carmichael. It has been claimed by Hamish Robertson in his study of *Carmina Gadelica* that Carmichael 'would in the face of Saxon disdain . . . touch up the expression of the Gael',¹² a claim supported by John Lorne Campbell in his response to Robertson's article.¹³ Thus MacGregor's attitude to proverbs, 'Gun robh daoine am measg nan Gaidheal anns na ceud linntibh a bha comharraichte airson gliocais, agus subhailc, oir tha na Gnath-

⁸ Nicolson, p. xxiii.

⁹ MacKinnon, p. 59.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 72.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 6.

¹² Hamish Robertson, 'Studies in Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*', *SGS*, 12 Part 2 (1976), 220-65 (p. 221).

¹³ John Lorne Campbell, 'Notes on Hamish Robertson's "Studies in *Carmina Gadelica*"' *SGS*, 13 Part 1 (1978), 1-17.

fhocail a chleachd iad a' dearbhadh seo', is very much in line with later nineteenth century Gaelic scholarly thinking.¹⁴

MacGregor appears to have actively collected proverbs when he lived in Skye, as Alexander Nicolson's acknowledgements in his preface to *Gaelic Proverbs* confirm:

To my dear old friend, the Rev. A. MacGregor, Inverness, I am indebted for several interesting illustrations, and some good sayings recovered from memory, out of a large collection made by him long ago in the Isle of Skye, the MS. of which had unfortunately been lost.¹⁵

This places MacGregor amongst that active group of ministers who were collecting folklore, including proverbs, during the second half of the nineteenth century. It is interesting to note that just as he contributed proverbs to Nicolson, so his father, Robert MacGregor, is mentioned in James Macintyre's early nineteenth century collection as having provided him with some proverbs.¹⁶ Nicolson's statement also reveals that it was at a relatively early period in terms of nineteenth century folklore collection that MacGregor had been involved in compiling this now lost list of proverbs, given that he left Skye in 1850. The list of 136 proverbs in Appendix 4, which have been taken, almost without exception, from his dialogues of the 1870s, gives some indication of how extensive the original list must have been. Although MacGregor provided Nicolson with proverbs for his collection, there are a significant number in his writings which do not appear in Nicolson's *Gaelic Proverbs*, as Appendix 4 demonstrates.

Alexander MacGregor's presentation of proverbial sayings differs significantly from that of his contemporaries. Virtually all those listed have been taken from his dialogues rather than having been published in list form. This produces two effects. Firstly the proverbs added richness to his colloquial dialogues, and secondly their presentation as part of a conversation was a more natural reflection of their everyday use than was their presentation in list form. Sometimes only the occasional proverb occurs in a dialogue in reference to the topic of discussion. When discussing a man who had worked for Murachadh Bàn and who

¹⁴ Clàr 187, p. 3.

¹⁵ Nicolson p. xxxiii.

¹⁶ Black, p. 39.

had now gone to join his sister in Australia, Murachadh says to Coinneach, 'Fear 's a bhaile agus aire as is fearr as no ann'.¹⁷ When Murachadh hears that Coinneach has been in Ireland he enquires what caused him to go there, and is told, 'A cheart nì a chuir an earb air an loch, an èiginn', since he was obliged to go there to look at cows and sheep for his employer.¹⁸ In another dialogue, Murachadh once more teases Coinneach about his belief in fairies, and Coinneach in response says of Murachadh, 'Ochan a Mhurachaidh, chan fhurasda a' chromag a thoirt as an t-seann mhaide!'¹⁹

Some dialogues, on the other hand, consist of little more than an exchange of proverbs between the two characters. These dialogues by MacGregor represent an interesting new dimension to folklore collection in the nineteenth century. MacGregor was clearly aware that many proverbial sayings of the Gaelic language were going out of use, as the words of Murachadh Bàn indicate,

Bithidh mòran diubh air an call - agus tha mòran diubh air an call a cheana, do bhrìgh nach robh iad air an tionaladh, agus air an clodh-bhualadh ann an leabhar le neach eigin comasach air sin a dhèanamh.²⁰

Still, MacGregor was not merely preserving proverbs, but was attempting to breathe new life into them, by replicating their traditional use in literature. Traditionally Gaels had a propensity for exchanging proverbs in conversation in what might be best described as proverb-capping, *gearradh-cainnte* or *bearradairachd*, and it seems to be this which MacGregor is attempting to capture in the dialogue while also reminding readers of proverbs' expressive potential. Alexander MacGregor can certainly be viewed as a collector, but the practical use to which he put his material is indicative of a greater inclination to revive certain aspects of Gaelic folklore than was possessed by many of his contemporaries, whose motivation seemed to stop at preservation. This attempted revival of folklore only stretched as far as the proverb, not as far as popular beliefs, as already demonstrated in discussing his writings on Highland folklore.²¹ This does, however, serve to emphasise how multi-purpose the dialogue was in his hands, offering the opportunity to inform,

¹⁷ Clàr 108, p. 105.

¹⁸ Clàr 76, p. 14.

¹⁹ Clàr 95, p. 210.

²⁰ Clàr 179, p. 3.

²¹ Chapter 8.

educate and entertain as discussed in an earlier chapter.²² Now it is evident that he drew upon his characters to promote and expand the use of the proverb to Gaels.

Ministers were as prominent in the collection of Gaelic proverbs as they were in that of superstition and folk-tales. This was due both to their academic interests and to the fact that they were amongst a minority of literate Gaels, at least until well into the nineteenth century. However, the moral aspect of proverbs should not be overlooked. Alexander MacGregor's writings provide evidence of this, although not explicitly. Significantly, he does not seem to have been an active collector of either superstition or of folktales, only of proverbs, the reason being one of moral content. In many proverbs there is an inherent morality, and for MacGregor this would have been attested in the Bible itself in the Book of Proverbs. Scripture gives its seal of approval to the general notion of the 'proverb' with the instructions 'a thuigsinn gnàth-fhacail agus eadar-mhìneachaidh, faclan nan daoine glìce, agus am briathran dorcha'.²³ One of MacGregor's characters observes 'nach eil cor no staid anns am feud duine a bhith airson nach faighear Sean-fhocal'.²⁴

Although relatively few in number, MacGregor does draw upon a few Gaelic proverbs with strong Biblical parallels, specifically from the Book of Proverbs. He uses 'chan aithnichear na daoine bochda le 'n càirdibh ach nuair a chì iad fhèin iomchaidh' and 'nuair a thig bochdainn a-staigh air an doras, grad theichidh gràdh a-mach air an uinneig', both mirroring Proverbs 14.20, 'The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends'. Similar sentiments are expressed in other Gaelic sayings such as 'cha robh caraid riamh aig duine bochd', 'am fear a ghleidheas a chuid gleidhidh e a chàirdean' and 'an uair a dh'fhalbhas tu casruisgte, teichidh do chàirdean uat'. Another dictum of the Book of Proverbs, 'wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction' (Proverbs 10.14), is to be found amongst MacGregor's in the form 'tha teangadh amadain fada gu leòir chum a sgòrnan a ghearradh', advising on the need to think before speaking and revealing ignorance. Other instances of Biblical echoes amongst MacGregor's proverbs are

²² Chapter 4.

²³ Proverbs 1. 6.

²⁴ Clàr 132, p. 301.

'seachain an t-slat agus mill do leanabh' (Proverbs 13.24, ge b'e chaomhnas an t-slat, is beag air a mhac) and 'Aig gach nì tha tràth, agus àm aig gach rùn fuidh nèamh. Am gu gul, agus àm gu gàire; àm gu caoidh agus àm gu dannsadh' (Ecclesiastes 3. 1-4). Yet there does not seem to be any particular bias towards the Biblical proverb in his dialogues, as might be expected, in fact they number only about five per cent of the body of proverbs used.

Given that the Victorian period was an age of social and personal reform, it is not surprising that the proverb, with its practical nature, should appeal to a man like Alexander MacGregor, with its twofold attraction of morality and native Gaelic culture. The moral aspect of Gaelic proverbs is stronger than that of the folk-tale where the moral is usually secondary to the tale,²⁵ and it may have been in this that MacGregor saw the superiority of the proverb over the moral tale. Sometimes the proverbs which he used were observations on human nature such as 'cluinnear an cagar còig mìle air falbh' and 'is rag an duine nach gabh comhairle'. The main identifiable themes are those of honour, combat and hard work, with a few on women.

Beginning with the last of these, women, Nicolson observes that Gaelic proverbs speak respectfully of women.²⁶ This may well be true, but those which appear in MacGregor's writings, if not disrespectful, are certainly not respectful, almost deliberately showing the worse side of female nature, for instance 'gheibh baobh a guidhe far nach fhaigh a h-anam trocail', 'is maith nach eil iuchraichean an domhain fo chrìos na h-aoin mhnà',²⁷ 'is truagh an taigh far an goir a' chearc nas treasa na 'n coileach', and 'ceannsaichidh gach fear an droch bhean ach esan aig a bheil i'. In one dialogue Coinneach is wanted at the door by a neighbour whom he later relates has fallen out with her daughter-in-law. Murachadh comments on how true the proverb on the subject of daughters-in-law is, 'mar dhobhrain a'm buin uisge, mar sheabhag gu eun sléibhe, mar chù gu cat, 's mar chat gu luch, tha bean mic gu màthair-chéile'.²⁸

²⁵ Alexander MacBain, 'Popular Tales', *TGSI*, 13 (1886-87), 103-22 (p. 103).

²⁶ Nicolson, p. xxvii.

²⁷ See Appendix 4, No. 87.

²⁸ Clàr 179, p. 3.

A number of the proverbs MacGregor employed relate to honourable conduct and to combat. 'Na h-iarr comhrag, ach na h-ob i', is perhaps typical in that it does not advocate fighting except when necessary, and 'bagair ach na buail' is in the same spirit. The bravery of the Gael is reflected in 'is miosa an t-eagal na an teagmhail' as is his honour in 'is cliùitiche an onoir na 'n t-òr'. These proverbs bolstered the notion of the Gael as an ideal soldier, a concept very important in Victorian Britain with its emphasis on military power. Proverbs such as these were ammunition against those critics of the Gael who thought of him as little better than a savage, and bolstered the self-respect of the Gaels themselves in the face of criticism. By the 1870s Alexander MacGregor's writings indicate that he believed strongly in the need for land reform in the Highlands. He could have drawn upon proverbs like 'na h-iarr comhrag, ach na h-ob i' in this context, but he did not, perhaps because they would have been interpreted as too inflammatory. In general, there seems to have been little use made of the store of Gaelic proverbs by those involved in rallying the Gaels - panegyric images were commonly used by men like John Murdoch. The proverb found little or no place in the rhetoric of land agitation leaders, in contrast with Biblical parallels.²⁹

Hard work and diligence merit praise in MacGregor's collection, proverbs such as 'Is e màthair an deagh fhortain, Dichìoll' and 'chan fheumar an t-each maith a shàrachadh'. Thrift too is highlighted when Murachadh, observing that some people have no regard for frugality, draws upon the proverb,

'Is e 'm buileachadh ni 'n cruinneachadh,
'Se 'n cruinneachadh ni sguaban;
Na sguaban ni na muilleana,
'S na muilleana na cruachan.³⁰

Proverbs such as these accord well with the nineteenth century ethos of self-improvement as laid out by Samuel Smiles in his work *Self-Help*, first published in 1859. Although not explicitly stated, it is clear that Alexander MacGregor subscribed to, or at least his views coincided with, those of Smiles, namely, in promoting the efforts of the individual, principally by means of industry, prudence and frugality.

²⁹ See Donald E. Meek, 'The Land Question Answered from the Bible: The Land Issue and the Development of a Highland Theology of Liberation', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 103 No. 2 (1987), 84-89.

³⁰ Clàr 132, p. 361.

Another Gaelic proverb which MacGregor draws upon in a dialogue is 'Is fearr làn an dùirn de cheàird, na làn an dùirn de'n òr'. This is very much in line with Smiles' view that wealth in itself is not necessarily a blessing as it may result in a life of idleness and under-achievement.³¹ The same point is made in his short piece in *An Gaidheal* entitled 'Crionntachd' in which he says of young men beginning to earn a wage,

Tha e móran ni's fearr air a shon féin gu'n cosnadh e le saothair a lámh am fichead punnd Sasunnach sin, na gum faigheadh e mar thiodhlac iad o neach eile. Ma chosnas e an t-airgiod sin, tha fios aige air an dichìoll a ghnàthaich e 'ga chur r'a chéile.³²

On the same theme, Smiles observed that 'the loose cash which many persons throw away uselessly, and worse, would often form a basis of fortune and independence for life'.³³ MacGregor echoes this in 'Nithe Nuadh agus Sean', a general piece of writing on health and wealth, when he recommends 'dèan cinnteach a meud do theachd-a-stigh, agus biodh e mór no beag, thig beò air ni's lugha, agus cha bhi thu chaoidh ann am bochduinn'.³⁴ This also lies behind 'Na Bancaichean-Caomhnaidh' in which he recommends saving a little every week or month, no matter how little, since it teaches one 'a bhi cùramach, measorra, agus stuama. Cuiridh iad cùl ris gach milleadh, ana-measarrachd, agus caitheamh'.³⁵ In 'An Seol air an Dèanar Airgiod' he tells readers, 'Na ceannaich an ni sin nach eil a dhìth ort. Gnàthaich gach uair chum buannachd, agus feuch gu'n cuir thu t-uairean dìomhanach gu deagh bhuil. Smuainich a rìs mu'n tilg thu fiù na sea-sgillin air falbh gu h-amaideach, agus cuimhnich gu bheil té eile agad r'a dhèanamh na h-àite'.³⁶

'Example is one of the most potent of instructors', proclaimed Smiles, whose *Self-Help* drew upon the example of men from all walks of life, from William Shakespeare and Robert Burns, to Sir Robert Peel, Michelangelo and Sir Francis Drake, to illustrate his points. MacGregor employed a similar tactic, demonstrating his own belief in the power of example as, for instance, in 'Na Bancaichean-Caomhnaidh'. The core of this piece of writing is the tale of a young Skye woman,

³¹ Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (First pub. 1859; London, 1910), pp. 22-23.

³² Clàr 83, p. 187.

³³ Smiles, p. 349.

³⁴ Clàr 71, p. 272.

³⁵ Clàr 60, p. 71.

³⁶ Clàr 56, p. 13.

widowed with three daughters. The widow, whom readers are told was ever industrious, diligent and wise, managed to save a small amount of money which a friend advised her to put in a savings-bank. As her savings grew, so she began selling goods and eventually owned her own shop. The writer concludes, 'Leanadh gach bean agus bantrach, gach oigfhear agus aosda, gach cosnach agus ceannard teaghlaich eiseimpleir na ban-Sgiathanaich dhichiollach agus ghlic so'.³⁷ The example may be fictional, and may not have achieved the exalted status which the exemplars of Smiles reached, but for Gaelic readers it was a more realistic one than that of men who became prime minister or a great literary figure, and even more important, it was an example of a *Gael* prospering.

MacGregor also shows the other side of the coin - the example not to follow - and in doing so, shows a less misogynistic side. Murachadh reminds Coinneach of the life Coinneach led before he married and his wife reformed him.

Mu'n do phòs thu, tha cuimhn' agad féin, nach robh annad ach sliomair mór de bhalach luidseach, neo-chuimir agus slaodach 'nad phearsa agus 'nad sgeudachadh. Seadh, a charaid, tha deagh fhios agad nach robh àite anns an am sin, àite sam bith cho taitneach leat, agus anns am bu trice am bitheadh tu, na tigh-òsda Dhonnachaidh Thàileir. Ochan is iomadh sgillinn gheal agus ruadh a dh'fhàg thu 'san tigh sin; agus is iomadh là agus oidhche a chuir thu seachad ann, air bheag buannachd do d'chorp no do d'anam.³⁸

Coinneach proceeds to lament the number of families which suffer on account of such behaviour by the head of the household. The subject of temperance was one which other writers in *An Gaidheal* focused on, such as P. MacGregor, who contributed four articles on alcohol and its dangers. In 'Tùs agus Nàdur Dìbhe Làidir' he contrasts the merriment arising from alcohol, as Gaelic bards traditionally described it, with the effect it had on families. 'Ciod an cridhealas a th'aig bean agus cloinn a mhisgeir nuair a tha iad 'nan crùban gu luideagach, acrach mu theallach fuar lom, agus esan ag òl 'san tigh-leanna an ni bu chòir biadh agus aodach a cheannach dhaibh'.³⁹ The issue of temperance was not entirely new to Gaels, as poems such as John MacCodrum's *Caraid agus Nàmhaid an Uisge-Bheatha* had put the case against

³⁷ Clàr 60, p. 72.

³⁸ Clàr 78, p. 13.

³⁹ P. MacGregor, 'Tùs agus Nàdur Dìbhe Làidir', *An G.*, 53 (1876), 129-36 (pp. 131-32).

the consumption of whisky as well as that in favour.⁴⁰ It was towards the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century that the temperance movement began to emerge in Britain as a whole, with John Dunlop, a Greenock lawyer and philanthropist, the moving spirit behind it.⁴¹ P. MacGregor's essay demonstrates that contributors to Gaelic periodicals were clearly picking up on contemporary social issues and making available to their readers information similar to that available to English readers. Alexander MacGregor also devoted attention to intemperance in his earlier stage of writing in a piece contributed to *Cuairtear nan Gleann* entitled 'Air Droch Chleachdannaibh'.⁴² In particular he attacked the custom of over-indulging in alcohol at funerals. Drawing on the Bible, he observed that drunkenness seems to have been one of the sins prevalent in Sodom and Gomorrah. He exhorted readers to follow the example of Lowlanders, who are sober at funerals, a time which is especially unsuitable for drunken behaviour. For all that MacGregor preached a temperance message, it would seem that he was really only concerned with the worst cases of intemperance. In moderation, alcohol seems to be acceptable if we are to believe Murachadh and Coinneach when they agree 'gu bheil staid mheadhonach ann eadar dà iomall criche, agus gur i sin an staid a's sona, a's glìce, agus a's fearr'.⁴³ Clearly, Alexander MacGregor was a moderate in more than the religious sense.

This concern with moral reformation, and with the reformation of the individual as expounded by Smiles, ignored the more far-reaching questions of social improvement and the legislation which that would require. This was an intrinsic part of Smiles' ethos, given that he believed that 'what we are accustomed to decry as great social evils, will for the most part, be found to be but the outgrowth of man's

⁴⁰ William Matheson ed., *The Songs of John MacCodrum* (Edinburgh, 1938), pp. 28-42. It is interesting to note that this dialogue poem is said to have been 'acted' out in North Uist until about the end of the nineteenth century, see John MacInnes, 'Recordings of Scottish Gaelic Heroic Ballads' in *The Heroic Process: Form, Function and Fantasy in Folk Epic* ed. by Bo Almqvist, Séamas Ó Catháin and Pádraig Ó Héalaí (Dun Laoghaire, 1987), pp. 101-30.

⁴¹ Elspeth King, *Scotland Sober and Free. The Temperance Movement 1829-1979* (Glasgow, 1979), p. 7.

⁴² Clàr 22, pp. 192-93. A tract of 1849, *Earail do Oigridh na Gaedhealtachd*, warns young Gaels arriving in Glasgow of the evils of alcohol, see Kenneth D. MacDonald, 'Glasgow and Gaelic Writing', *TGSI*, 57 (1990-92), 395-428 (p. 407).

⁴³ Clàr 80, p. 139.

own perverted life'.⁴⁴ Donald Smith in *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest* summed up the nineteenth century Church's focus on the individual rather than society with the words, 'God, it seemed, "helped those who help themselves"'.⁴⁵ Anything which threatened to upset the stability of the social pyramid was to be avoided, therefore attention should not be devoted to society's improvement, but to that of individuals. This is strongly reflected in Alexander MacGregor's writings.

Moral Tales

Where MacGregor found proverbs to be a distinctively Gaelic way of reminding Gaels of various truisms, the tale meets with different treatment in his writing. In the *Inverness Advertiser* in 1874, a lecture given by MacGregor is reported during which he is quoted as having said,

Still more, it is to be deplored that the 'Sgeulachdan' or 'tales', which were at one time so universally prized are now so completely forgotten. In these and in the proverbs of the country, were the collective wisdom and intelligence of the Highlands to be seen.⁴⁶

At no point does MacGregor reproduce any Gaelic folk-tales either on their own or as part of a dialogue. This could be attributed to the fact that he was not an active collector of such folklore material, just as he did not actively collect material concerning popular customs and beliefs, as shown in the previous chapter. What seems to be a more likely explanation, however, is that there was insufficient, if any, moral in traditional tales to suit MacGregor's purposes. Although many traditional tales did contain some moral aspect, such as demonstrating the fall of the greedy or the wicked, the moral was not the focus of the tale so much as the entertaining narrative. MacGregor, on the other hand, provides tales with very clear morals, in keeping with the improving philosophy of his time. An example of such a tale is 'An t-Or Cheàrd' which appeared first in *Fear-Tathaich nam Beann* in 1849 and in abridged form in *An Gaidheal* in 1874. This tells of a servant who, having murdered his master, sets himself up as a goldsmith with his victim's money. Over the years he rises in status until he becomes a judge. However, at the trial of a man found guilty

⁴⁴ Smiles, p. 3.

⁴⁵ Donald C. Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest* (New York, 1987), p. 110.

⁴⁶ Clàr 208, p. 4.

of murdering his master, the judge's conscience causes him to confess to his own crime and is sentenced to hang along with the other criminal. The sensitivities of a modern reader are perhaps unprepared for this unforgiving ending, the message, of being punished for crime in the long-term, being unequivocal, although MacGregor does conclude on a more positive note, 'Chaidh iad le cheile stigh do shiorruidheachd ag aideachadh toillteannas am binne fein, agus a reir coslais a' creidsinn 's an Ti aig a bheil slainte do cheann-feadhna nam peacach a ni aithreachas'.⁴⁷ Just as he used the widow with her three daughters in 'Na Bancaichean-Caomhnaidh', so too in another of his tales MacGregor drew upon stereotypical folk-tale characters. 'An Dilleachdan', published in *An Gaidheal* in 1876 and then again in the *Highlander* in 1880, is a salutary tale which demonstrates that greed is not rewarded. The essence of the tale is that a fiddle is given to a musically talented orphan, but its owner, an unpleasant drunkard, demands it be given back to him when he returns home. He demands to be given £5, not the fiddle. He gets this and it later emerges that the fiddle is very valuable, the orphan prospers and its original owner falls into poverty. The two characters and their respective circumstances are strikingly juxtaposed in the concluding paragraph, beginning with the orphan,

Bha e cliùiteach, measail agus macanta. Dh' fhàs e glé shaibhear, ach bha e truacanta, teo-chridheach, agus fialaidh le chuid do'n fhéumach. Cha b'fhada gus an d' fhàs an droch dhuine sin a shàruich e 'na òige agus 'na bhochduinn 'na chuspair truagh an eu-dòchais. Bha e gun mheas aig a luchd-duthcha agus 'na chùis-ghraine do gach inbh agus aois.⁴⁸

'Mac na Bantraich', which MacGregor published in *An Gaidheal*, has a stronger religious tone, telling of a spoiled son, an only child, who does not follow the straight and narrow, much to the distress of his widowed mother. He joins the army and goes abroad, where his mother has a Bible sent out to him. From this point he changes, becoming very pious, and after receiving a fatal wound in battle is reported as reading the Bible before he died. Another tale, entitled 'Na Morairean Dearg agus an t-Sàbaid', promotes Sabbatarianism. The tale involves the adjournment of a trial on a Saturday evening until Monday morning. A farmer on the jury requests that he be allowed to go home to take in his crop lest the weather should turn bad. He

⁴⁷ Clàr 75.

⁴⁸ Clàr 112 (a), p. 268

is denied permission to do so, being told that if his crop were in definite danger that would be different, otherwise Sunday should be observed as a day of rest. 'An Cìs-Sheachnaiche' from *Cuairtear nan Gleann* in 1840 is written in a similarly moralising tone, beginning on a Biblical quotation from Romans 13. 7, 'Air an aobhar sin thugaibh do na h-uile an dlighe féin: càin dhàsan d'an dlighear càin, cìs dhàsan d'an dlighear cìs, eagal dhàsan d'an dlighear eagal, agus urram dhàsan d'an dlighear urram'.⁴⁹ MacGregor gives the account as told by a minister who was present at the death-bed of a smuggler who had been injured by law enforcers whilst in possession of illegally produced alcohol. The dying man is a pitiful creature who confesses not only to smuggling, but also to having killed a boy some ten years earlier, a deed which now haunts him. After the man dies the minister proclaims, 'Cha téid an sealladh so gu bràth as m'aire, agus bu leòir e chum toirt air na h-uile, nam faiceadh iad e, gach gnìomh toirmisgte agus mì-laghail a chur air cùl', making the two-fold point of the importance of moral reformation and of obeying the law.⁵⁰

There is another type of moral tale within MacGregor's work which merits a separate sub-group, namely those written in a style which consciously imitates that of the Bible. These have already been mentioned in Chapter 4. By this I mean that they are divided into verses, and sometimes even into chapters, and they tend also to imitate the language of the Bible. The most developed of these is 'Ionraic Mac-Ailein' in *An Gaidheal* in 1875. This contains two morally uplifting tales, presented as two separate chapters. The first tells of a beggar who is turned away from a rich man's door. The words of the beggar, 'A Dhé, thoir maitheanas da, oir chan eil fios aige ciod a ta e ag ràdh no 'dèanamh', echoing as they do the words of the Bible itself, haunt the man, who repents and takes the beggar into his house.⁵¹ The second chapter tells of a proud, self-opinionated man whose downfall is described as he falls into debt. One quotation further to those provided in Chapter 4 will serve to remind of the Biblical style of these moralising texts,

11. Agus tharladh air là àraidh gu'n d' thainig Tomas ann an carbad chaigeann each do'n bhaile mhór, agus chuir e failt air Tearlach Mac-Alasdair.

⁴⁹ Clàr 6, p. 169.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 173.

⁵¹ Clàr 102, p. 328.

12. Agus air dha teachd a nuas as a' charbad, labhair e ag radh, Gu deimhin, deimhin a deiream riut, a Thearlaich, is sona do dhuine comas agus toil a bhi aige furtachd a dheanamh air a choimhearsnach ann an uair na h-eiginn, agus gnìomh trocaireach a nochdadh dha.⁵²

In 'Caib.III', most likely intended by MacGregor as a continuation of 'Ionraic Mac-Ailein', the same structure is used to relate the tale of a woman who lost her husband and two sons and was left to support her two daughters, during which time she never lost faith in God. While the widow was sick, one of her daughters had a dream and, when she did as instructed in the dream, found a purse of money. Rather than keeping it, it was returned to its rightful owner, the result being that the family was given a reward in addition to a house and an education for the two girls. The final verse concludes, 'Cha tréig an Tighearna iadsan a chuireas an dòchas ann, agus cha dearmad e a bhantrach agus a sliochd 'nan trioblaid. Is beannaichte an ti a dh'earbas as an Tighearna, oir cha mheallair e 'na dhòchas'.⁵³

In such texts we have a clear indication of a conscious decision on the part of MacGregor to imitate the style of the Bible, the intention presumably being to lend weight to these tales with a style with which all readers would be familiar. MacGregor even manages to promote the *Celtic Magazine* and the *Highlander* in one such piece. 'An t-Oganach Diadhaidh', published in 1878, concerns Seumas, a crippled boy who, on seeing a shop-woman tear pages from the Bible to wrap up goods which he is buying, is outraged at this treatment of the Book. Unable to pay her two pennies for it, they agree that if he can bring her the Bible's equivalent weight in paper he can have the Bible. The only paper at home is a chestful of copies of the *Celtic Magazine* and the *Highlander* which his uncle had sent to him. At the thought of parting with them Seumas responds 'ach am Bìobull féin, chan eil ni fo'n ghréin ris nach dealaichinn mu'n dealaichinn ris a' *Cheilteach* agus ris an *Ard-Albannach*, oir nach iadsan a thug dhomh am beagan eòlais a th'agam, agus nach iadsan a theagaisg mi air a' Ghailig a leughadh, agus uime sin, cha dealaich mi riutha ri m' bheò'.⁵⁴ The main point of the tale seems to be to remind readers of the value of the Bible and of the respect which it deserves, but equally to make the same point

⁵² Ibid., p. 329.

⁵³ Clàr 115, p. 14.

⁵⁴ Clàr 180, p. 3.

about the two Inverness publications which MacGregor was ever keen to promote. This also underlines his belief in the educational value of the journals.

I have said that Alexander MacGregor chose not to draw upon 'sgeulachdan'. He did, however, use some which would fall into Aarne-Thompson's classification of international tales under 'Animal Tales'.⁵⁵ 'Animal tales' were among those recorded in the Highlands by John Francis Campbell's collectors, and MacGregor uses one which he explains to his readers is one of Aesop's fables and which clearly met with MacGregor's approval. As Murachadh explains to Coinneach,

Is samhla-bhriathra iad a tha drùidteach, so-thuigsinn agus goirid air chor is nach bi neach ullamh air an dicheimhneachadh. Tha mar a dh'éirich do'n chù le 'fhaileas féin, co maith ann an seadh co maith ri searmoin o sheann Mhaighstir Dòmhnall còir, agus móran ni's fhasadh a chuimhneachadh.⁵⁶

Murachadh then tells Coinneach about the dog and its shadow, and in somewhat heavy-handed manner explains the fable's meaning to ensure that all his readers have understood the moral. Next he tells of the goat which is tricked into helping a fox escape from a well, only to become trapped itself. Again Murachadh explains the moral of the fable, and this is further reinforced by Coinneach when he extends the animal symbolism to apply specifically to the world in which readers live. 'Tha e cianail, gidheadh, gu'm bheil na sionnaich sin fathast lionmhor, seadh sionnaich air dhà-chois, agus is iad na h-àitean a bhios iad a' taoghal, na h-àiteachan anns am bheil iad cinnteach gu'n tachair iad air na gobhair'.⁵⁷

Clearly, MacGregor's main aim in such writings was not to entertain, as traditional tales did, but to instruct readers. Proverbs and fables, however, contained a sufficiently high moral content to be acceptable. In this MacGregor was very much part of not only a Highland, but a Scottish and indeed British trend towards self-improvement. The Rev. Norman MacLeod in *The Home School or Hints on Home Education* stated in the middle of the nineteenth century,

What people call truisms and commonplaces, are often those very truths about common things which we require most to be reminded of; lest, while gazing on

⁵⁵ A. Aarne & S. Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale* (Helsinki, 1964), p. 25, No. 34A.

⁵⁶ Clàr 130, p. 334.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 335.

some brilliant meteor in the distant sky, we may stumble in our path, or fall into a ditch at our feet.⁵⁸

Chambers' Edinburgh Journal occasionally published such reminders under 'Maxims, Morals and Golden Rules' with observations such as 'he who gives for the sake of thanks knows not the pleasure of giving'.⁵⁹ Evidence from previous chapters indicates that MacGregor was a regular reader of this journal, and doubtless of others which are less easily identified. It is likely that it is from these wider readings that Alexander MacGregor found the inspiration for his contributions to the *Highlander* under the heading 'Cùil Bheag nan Glic Bhriathar'. These pieces consisted of a number of wisdoms, sometimes of little more than a line each, on other occasions consisting of entire paragraphs. An example from one 'Cùil Bheag nan Glic Bhriathar' column in the *Highlander* of 1877 is: 'Cha taitneach leinn a bhith air ar mealladh le 'r naimhdibh, no a bhith air ar tréigsinn le 'r càirdibh, gidheadh tha sinn gu minic air ar mealladh agus air ar tréigsinn leinn féin'.⁶⁰ A more modern equivalent would be radio's 'Thought for the Day', which offers some brief words of wisdom of a religious nature. The maxims which MacGregor published may well have been ones which he encountered in his reading of English language publications and which he then translated into Gaelic. There is nothing specifically Gaelic about them as compared with the proverbs discussed earlier.

Although MacGregor focused on moral guidance, that is not to say that he completely neglected guidance of a more practical nature which Gaels, particularly those migrating to Lowland cities, would find useful. Advice of this nature was not new to Gaelic literature, having been developed by Caraid nan Gaidheal in dialogues and letters, depicting the inexperienced and naive Gael exposed to the perils of city life, often to humorous effect. In MacGregor's dialogues characters are to be found describing their experiences of technological innovations such as rail travel, or explaining how the telegraph works. In one, Coinneach relates to Murachadh his near fatal experience of gas when staying in Glasgow.

An deis dhomh mo bheannachadh fein, agus ochan! is ann agamsa a bha feum air beannachadh o'n Airde an oidhche sin, shéid mi as an solus, agus thilg mi

⁵⁸ Norman MacLeod, *The Home School or Hints on Home Education* (4th edition, Edinburgh, 1856).

⁵⁹ *CEJ*, 31 October 1840, p. 364.

⁶⁰ Clàr 166, p. 3.

mi fein 's na plaideachaibh; shéid mi gu grad as e, mar a b' àbhaist domh coinnlean geire nam molt a chur as, agus thug mi mo leabuidh orm. Ann am meadhon na h-oidhche, bha mi 'n impis mo thachdadh; dh'éirich mi, ach cha robh anail agam, agus thòisich mi air gleadhraich a dheanamh air feadh an t-seòmair, a' tilgeadh nam bòrd thairis, a' briseadh nan soithichean-ionnlaid, agus a' fairtleachadh orm dorus no uinneag fhaotuinn thall no bhos . . .⁶¹

Fortunately Coinneach is rescued in order to relate his experience which may prevent other Gaels from committing a similar error.

This chapter has shown the wide range of MacGregor's writings which can be classified under the heading 'Proverbs and Moral Tales'. It has emerged that MacGregor's writings were very much part of a moralising trend within publication outwith the Highlands to educate the reading public through the dissemination of 'useful knowledge'. MacGregor ensured that the Gaelic reading public was provided with similarly 'improving' literature in Gaelic periodicals. Frequently, MacGregor portrayed Gaels in his moral tales in an attempt to increase the relevance of the texts to those reading them. The writer may have felt that the Gaels were in particular need of guidance in what were unstable times for them, many of them experiencing at first hand the dangers of an increasingly materialistic world, and that his writings provided a measure of stability and reassurance. What his writings demonstrate very clearly is how Gaelic society was moving forward, keeping pace with the nineteenth century. Such reforming literature as MacGregor produced should also be seen in a wholly Gaelic context. It filled the chasm left by the demise of the clan chief who, in literature at least, provided an exemplary social role, in theory representing all the worthy qualities to be emulated in everyday life. The proverb, the only form of Gaelic folklore which MacGregor seems to have actively collected, happily coincided with the vindication of the Gael as well as with the improving ethos of the nineteenth century.

⁶¹ Clàr 107, p. 73.

CHAPTER 10

THE WRITER'S ATTITUDE TO GAELIC

Tha nis uine fhada o chaidh e do'n t-*shipping office*, agus tha *confinement* fiadhaich air 's cha 'n 'eil e 'g *enjoyigeadh* na *fresh air* cho tric 's a dh'fheumadh e, a chionn gur e tha *responsible* airson na h-uile *important business* agus *transaction* a tha 'san *office* timchioll air *foreign ships*; agus ma theid dad cearr bithidh na h-*owners perfectly wild*; oir tha iad cho *particular*. A bharrachd air a sin tha *late hours* aige, agus cha 'n fhaigh e dhol a ghabhail *walk* ach ainneamh. Cha 'n 'eil e idir *sound* 's tha eagal orm gun tig e gu *consumption* dha!¹

This speech, from a dialogue which appeared in the *Highlander*, is intended by the character to demonstrate how a young Gael in the city has begun to lose his Gaelic. It is just one of many testimonies to be found in the pages of that newspaper to the high level of awareness amongst Gaels of the perils facing the Gaelic language in the later part of the nineteenth century. Typical of comments on the subject in the paper's letters page is one which refers to the 'disgusting mongrel medley' of Gaelic and English in use.² Other writers focus on the detrimental effect of English on the quality of Gaelic being used. There are numerous observations in the same vein as the gentleman who wrote 'tha moran anns an am so a labhairt agus a sgrìobhadh Gaidhlig air dòigh a tha leigeil ris gu 'm bheil iad a' breanachadh ann am Beurla agus ag eadartheangachadh gu Gaidhlig, agus mar so, tha iad a' toirt dhuinn ni a tha leth-chosmhuil ri call air ath-theothachadh 'n uair a dh'fheud iad a bhi toirt dhuinn suathadh agus blas agus toradh na h-inntinn fhior Ghaidhealach i fein'.³ Letters and articles in both Gaelic and English, and the paper's own editorial column, played a significant role in promoting Gaelic language issues.

The catalyst for much of this attention was the 1872 Education Act which failed to so much as mention the Gaelic language, or as Charles Withers has assessed it in *Gaelic Scotland*, 'It did not attempt to reverse the processes that had brought about the alienation of Gaelic from education and self-advancement'.⁴ The Act on its own, however, was insufficient to generate this strength of feeling. Instead, the

¹ Carraig-thura, 'Comhradh eadar Seumas Bàn agus Domhnall Gobha', *TH*, 19 February 1876, p. 3.

² Letter, *TH*, 6 December 1873, p. 4.

³ Letter, *TH*, 18 November 1876, p. 3.

⁴ Charles W. J. Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland 1698-1981* (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 157.

timing of the Act is fundamental to an understanding of the feeling which it aroused. Twenty years earlier and it would undoubtedly have met with less opposition, since the Gaels were then less politically active, still being in the throes of famine and clearance. Coinciding with the emergence of the pro-crofting movement, the language issue found an ally in a Highland resurgence and was often linked with the question of tenants' rights as Gaels became more vociferous in proclaiming those rights. The importance of this has been highlighted by William Gillies, who has observed that Gaelic scholarship was to flourish in this same favourable environment.⁵ John Murdoch, editor of the *Highlander*, was a key figure in propounding the inextricable links between these two issues, both in campaigning speeches and in the pages of his newspaper. An editorial from a *Highlander* of 1876 demonstrates this unequivocally.

Depend upon this - the foreign education has been part and parcel of the scheme by which the clansmen have been ousted and their lands made into wilderness for wild beasts and savage men; and when the Highlanders have asserted their right and their influence in the matter of education, as they are now especially called upon to do, they will have taken a great step towards recovering their more material possessions. There will be a gain of position and an actual development of power.⁶

The existence of the *Highlander* was crucial to the high profile of both language and land issues. Not only did editorials, articles and letters deal with these issues, so too did fictional material such as the dialogue. One of the most telling dialogues as regards contemporary awareness of land and language is that which appeared in 1881 under the pen name 'Hebridean', a dialogue between a landlord, two crofters and a factor. Even before the conversation begins, an explanatory note reveals that the landlord does not have Gaelic and therefore requires a translator.⁷ The conversation which follows is a bilingual one with the landlord speaking English and the crofters speaking Gaelic. The subject is rent rises, about which the crofters are complaining, with the gulf between landlord and tenant firmly underlined by the

⁵ William Gillies, 'A Century of Gaelic scholarship', *Gaelic and Scotland*, ed. by William Gillies (Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 3-21 (6).

⁶ Editorial, *TH*, 29 July 1876, p. 5.

⁷ Hebridean, 'Comhradh eadar an t-Uachdaran, na Croitearan (Alasdair Donn agus Dòmhnall Bàn) agus am Bàillidh', *TH*, 2 February 1881, p. 6.

writer's use of language. On the other hand, we find the language situation being employed to more humorous ends as in one tale of a court house in the Highlands in which a man wants to take the oath in Gaelic. Only he and one other man speak Gaelic so he takes the oath, 'gu 'n tugadh an donus gu ruig iffrrinn a ch'uile mac mathar a tha 'n so ach mi fhìn 's tu fhein'.⁸ The pages of the *Highlander* provide evidence of contemporary attitudes to the Gaelic language in the later nineteenth century which complements the more conventional evidence of statistics and official reports. Fiction such as this was written for popular consumption by a Gaelic-speaking readership, and so gives some measure of the preoccupations of writers and of the subject matter in which they believed their readers would be interested.

The Gaelic language is one of the recurrent themes in Alexander MacGregor's later stage of writing, i.e. post 1870, reflecting both his own interest and that of Gaelic readers generally in the issue. He raises the subject in dialogues, speeches, letters and essays, ranging from the issue of Gaelic in schools to the lack of Gaelic in the upper echelons of Highland society. Unlike Murdoch he does not link 'tìr is teanga', being somewhat more reticent than Murdoch on the subject of the land and tenants' rights. He was, however, very much aware of the implications of the linguistic barrier which was increasingly common between proprietor, or proprietor's agents, and the Gaelic-speaking tenantry. This is evident from his letter entitled 'Am Breitheamh 's am Baillidh gun Ghailig' in which he refers to 'na Bàillidhean a bhios 'togail nam màl on tuàdh bheag agus gun aon fhocal Gaelig aca a labhras iad ris an t-sluagh'.⁹ His letter is in response to one which had appeared the previous week on the same matter from 'Iain o'n Eilean Fhada' with whose sentiments he wholeheartedly agrees. MacGregor points out that the factor or ground officer's inability to speak Gaelic tends only to be to the crofter's loss, and that anyone in a position of power should be able to understand the language of those over whom he has authority.

In common with the writer quoted at the beginning of this chapter, MacGregor was very much aware of the decline in the quality of Gaelic being spoken. He draws attention to this in one dialogue which sees Murachadh and

⁸ Iain, 'Alasdair Ban 's na Mòrairean Dearga', *TH*, 21 February 1874, p. 3.

⁹ *Clàr* 141, p. 3.

Coinneach bemoan the fact that many young Highland ministers are not capable of speaking properly because of their ignorance of Gaelic, for example: 'Bha oganach tapaidh o cheann ghoirid a' searmonachadh 'san Eaglais againne, agus ged is nar domh ràdh, is minic a thug e snodh-gaire orm leis na mearachdan a bha e 'deanamh, le bhi gu tric a' cur na cartach air thoiseach air an each'.¹⁰ The lack of ministers able to preach in Gaelic was afflicting the Gaelic Church in Inverness in 1877 when the charge was vacant. At a meeting of the Inverness Established Presbytery the problem of finding preachers to supply the charge was discussed. The shortage of Gaelic-speaking preachers was so severe that the assembled ministers did not know of 'a single Gaelic licentiate available to supply one pulpit for a single Sabbath'.¹¹ In actual fact, this was no new issue since a shortage of Gaelic-speaking ministers had plagued the Church in Scotland over the centuries. The shortage of ministers fluent in Gaelic was identified by Parliament and the Church as early as 1641, and addressed by providing additional bursaries for Gaelic-speaking men to train for the ministry.¹² The Disruption only served to exacerbate the problem with two ministers now required for every one required before. This is characteristic of many of the issues facing the Gaelic language and its supporters in the later nineteenth century. The issues and problems being discussed and criticised were, for the most part, not new. In actual fact, the issues were little different from those of a century, or even two centuries, earlier. What made them distinctive in the nineteenth century was the political climate of the time. Therefore it is necessary to consider Alexander MacGregor's attitude to the Gaelic language from both a contemporary and an historical perspective in order to understand his viewpoint more fully.

MacGregor's numerous comments about Gaelic require to be pieced together to give an overall view of his perceptions of the language and the place which he believed it should have occupied in nineteenth century Highland society. It does no harm to reiterate that he himself was a native speaker of Gaelic and was therefore not a disinterested commentator. He states that he preached in Gaelic 'for upwards of

¹⁰ Clàr 121, p. 165.

¹¹ *TH*, 8 September 1877.

¹² Withers, p. 33 ff.

twenty years without hardly preaching at all in the English language'.¹³ His obituary in the *Northern Chronicle* tells that 'he ceased long ago to preach in Gaelic',¹⁴ although he seems to have undertaken to preach one Gaelic service each Sunday in the Gaelic Church in Inverness for a short period in 1877 while the Presbytery attempted to find a Gaelic-speaking minister to fill the vacancy.¹⁵

In a lecture given at the Inverness Workmen's Club in 1874 he commented on the retreat of 'the old venerable Gaelic' amidst social change in the Highlands and added that although this was a matter of much regret, 'these changes will result in good to the nation at large, and they cannot fail to add to the prosperity of the Highlands and Islands. That prosperity need never be expected to take full effect until our noble Highlanders become assimilated to the kingdom at large in their language, and habits, and social condition'.¹⁶ The reference to 'the old and venerable Gaelic' gives an early indication of the line he is about to take, namely that Gaelic is part of an old romanticised past rather than of a new and progressive Highlands, underlined by his references to it on various occasions as 'cainnt Oisein agus Fhinn'.¹⁷ The same sentiment is conveyed in another speech when he claims of Gaelic, 'air Laidinn, 's air Gréugais bheir i barrachd, agus cha'n fhaighear a leithid 'ga labhairt fo'n ghréin'.¹⁸ Thus he places Gaelic squarely beside dead languages, albeit prestigious dead languages. He assigns it to the spheres of antiquarian research as though a dead specimen worthy of scrutiny 'by all philologists who wish to dig out the interesting roots of the Celtic tongue'.¹⁹ In effect he is denying Gaelic a place as a functional language in the modern world. His comparison of Gaelic with the classical languages may have been intended to elevate the prestige of the language and by implication Gaelic speakers' sense of their own worth. With the benefit of hindsight it seems questionable that this stance would have raised Gaels' self-respect in real terms by reinforcing the fact that their native tongue was to be placed on the same

¹³ Clàr 219, p. 10.

¹⁴ 'Death and Funeral of the Rev. Alexander MacGregor', *Northern Chronicle*, 26 October 1881.

¹⁵ *TH*, 8 September 1877.

¹⁶ Clàr 208, p. 4.

¹⁷ Examples are to be found in Clàr 155, p. 3 and in Clàr 92, p. 50.

¹⁸ Clàr 211, p. 9.

¹⁹ Clàr 208, p. 4.

shelf as Latin and Greek, rather than along with English as a language of commerce and education. It was in this climate of opinion that Gaelic was made a 'specific subject' in 1885, further distancing it from English as a medium of tuition.

MacGregor was far from being alone in his attitude to Gaelic as even a cursory glance at contemporary volumes from the Gaelic Society of Inverness demonstrates. The Society, established in 1871, states in its bilingual constitution that amongst the objects of the Society is 'the perfecting of the Members in the use of the Gaelic language'.²⁰ It seems somewhat ironic, therefore, that of the four speeches given at the first annual assembly of the Society, only MacGregor's was in Gaelic. Similarly, the lectures in the first volume were all in English. The significance of Gaelic for many members of the Society lay in the fact that it represented a key to the past rather than to the future as is alluded to in the first volume of the Society's Transactions,

. . . for thus are the language and the very pastimes of the humblest of our Highland people mixed up with the great and interesting subjects of philology, ethnology, history, and anthropology generally, and invested with an importance over and above that which they possess to ourselves as being our own and something of a key and a stimulus to the minds of our people.²¹

Clearly the antiquarian impulse was stronger than that of revival, and so it was that in the minds of some, Gaelic's value lay in its association with the Gaels' past rather with their future. Indeed there were those amongst the Society's membership whose attitude to Gaelic was not entirely supportive. One such man was Alexander Dallas, Town Clerk of Inverness, who saw no point in educating Gaelic-speaking children to read and write their native tongue. He is reported as stating that 'whilst allowing the language to die, we might so labour as to render essential service to philology and archaeology generally, by contributing our Gaelic share to the common stock of Celtic lore'.²² Within this one 'Gaelic' society, then, there was a spectrum of views on the Gaelic language, with the focus tending to be towards the

²⁰ Constitution of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, *TGSI*, 1 (1871-72), v.

²¹ 'Introduction', *TGSI*, 1, (1871-72), ix-xv (p. xi).

²² Minutes from meeting to establish the Gaelic Society of Inverness, *TGSI*, 1 (1871-72), 4.

archaic - and this Society was one of the main channels through which the pro-Gaelic education argument was voiced during the 1870s.

MacGregor was, however, as supportive of the Gaelic language as any member of the Society and makes it clear that there is nothing inherently wrong with being a Gaelic speaker. 'It is not the *knowledge* of Gaelic but the *ignorance* of English that hinders the Highlander when he *is* hindered in the walks of commerce'.²³ In this he was of the same opinion as Alexander Nicolson who undertook to produce a parliamentary report on education in the Hebrides in 1866. Nicolson asserted that 'it is not necessary to hold that the use of the Gaelic language is *per se* incompatible with enlightenment' or that English would improve Gaels, intellectually, morally or religiously, but that 'it would unquestionably confer upon them a power, the lack of which, putting other things out of account at present, is one of the most serious hindrances to their attainment of their just position in the scale of civilisation'.²⁴

MacGregor often used the dialogue for didactic ends, and so we find him demonstrating by example the benefits with which an ability to speak English could provide Gaels. In a dialogue from 1874 he wrote of one teacher,

Dh'ionnsaich e a' Bheurla, maille ri sgrìobhadh agus cunntas, co buileach coimhlionta, ceart, is nach lugha na cuignear de na h-oganaich a ta 'nan cleirich le deagh dhuais ann an tigh-oifig na slighe-iarainn, agus tha na h-uiread eile 'san dreuchd cheudna ann am buthannaibh 'sa bhaile; agus na h-uiread a thall 'sa bhos mar sin, a' dèanamh gu cliuiteach air an son fein. Ach a-nis nam bu sgoil Ghàidhlig a bh'aca, bhiodh iad sin uile gu ruig an la 'n diugh 'nan leth-thraillean 'sa Ghleannfearna.²⁵

The message is clearly one of social advancement through the acquisition of English, the prevailing contemporary attitude towards language. MacGregor does not stand out in any way because of this attitude, rather the opinions which he voices tend to be representative of the general consensus on Gaelic amongst educated Gaels.

One of the clearest statements by MacGregor of his attitude to language in Highland education appeared in a contribution to the *Celtic Magazine* entitled 'The Highlands and Present Position of Highlanders',

²³ Clàr 215, p. 230.

²⁴ *Report on the State of Education in the Hebrides*, PP (1887), xxv, 777.

²⁵ Clàr 150, p.3.

The teaching of Gaelic alone is not advocated as such a course would not be either prudent nor profitable where the English language is gaining ground, but the teaching of Gaelic and English together, and at the same time, is both reasonable and proper. Let the one language explain the other, and thus the reciprocal progress made in both would eventually confer on the pupils of all classes a correct knowledge of both languages. On the other hand that knowledge would be no burden, but a benefit.²⁶

To anyone not familiar with the treatment which Gaelic received at the hands of Lowland education bodies this statement might seem so obvious it need hardly be stated, but in the nineteenth century it required to be stated and restated. In order to understand MacGregor's comments on the role of Gaelic in education and the influences which shaped his attitude, it is impossible to ignore the origins of formal education within the Gaelic speaking area and the position accorded to the language. These origins date back to the early eighteenth century with the foundation of the SSPCK in 1709.²⁷ Victor Durkacz in *The Decline of the Celtic Languages* highlighted the way in which the Gaelic language was further alienated from a Lowland culture which already perceived it as foreign by its association with Jacobitism and Catholicism.²⁸ It was this perception which shaped the attitudes of those Lowland based educationalists who were to control education in the Highlands from the beginning of the eighteenth century. Thus initially the teaching of Gaelic reading was proscribed in SSPCK schools, a policy which appears to have been extended to proscribing the use of the language in teaching.²⁹ Gaelic-speaking children in the Highlands were expected to receive their education through a language which most of them would not understand. This gave rise to the situation that children could read English but could not understand what they read. Not until 1723 was any concession made towards Gaelic when it was conceded that the language might be used as a means of teaching English in order to ensure that children understood what was taught. That the furthering of English was the only

²⁶ Clàr 224, p. 284.

²⁷ The Statutes of Iona of 1609, Act of the Privy Council, 1616 and the Act of 1696, although pertaining to formal education, had less direct bearing on the position of Gaelic in Highland education than subsequent acts and educational bodies.

²⁸ Victor Edward Durkacz, *The Decline of the Celtic Languages* (Edinburgh, 1983), pp. 50-52.

²⁹ Withers, pp. 122-23.

factor which gained a place in the school for Gaelic is underlined by the SSPCK's banning of Gaelic in the playground in 1751. Little was to change over the following decades in SSPCK policy as it maintained its stance on Gaelic as a means of facilitating the spread of English and thus the achievements of its end of anglicising and civilising the Highlands. Parochial schools, as established by the 1696 Act for Settling of Schools, excluded Gaelic in favour of teaching English only.³⁰

The nineteenth century saw the emergence of two significant new forces in Highland education namely the Edinburgh Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools (ESSGS) in 1811 and General Assembly Schools from 1825. Both these wished to see the spread of English, but their policies differed from those of the SSPCK. The former's sole purpose was to teach Gaels to read the Scriptures in their native tongue. The latter adopted a policy of teaching Gaelic reading initially, followed by Gaelic and English, although Durkacz suggests that this policy was not always implemented by teachers, especially in the second part of the nineteenth century when half the General Assembly Schools in Gaelic speaking areas did not teach Gaelic.³¹ With the exception of the ESSGS, educational bodies involved in Highland education in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were isolating the Gaelic language from literacy and undermining its status as a fully functional language. MacGregor describes the effect of almost a century and a half of such educational policies as witnessed by himself in Kilmuir during the 1830s.

In this district there are two schools, one from the Gaelic School Society, and the other the Parish School. From the former, English is totally excluded, and the pupils, principally girls, are taught to read a little of the Gaelic Scriptures, but get no knowledge of English, or of any other branch whatever. In this respect, the pupils grow up quite ignorant of the national language and quite helpless and isolated as to associating with their southern brethren, to whom they have frequently to resort for employment. In the Parish School, on the other hand, the very opposite course is practised:- every vocable of their vernacular Gaelic is excluded, and the child that is discovered stealthily speaking it in school receives an infliction from the master's tawse. There are classes, therefore, of boys and girls in their teens who can read English fluently, distinctly, and correctly, and still do not understand the meaning of one word out of a hundred that they are reading.³²

³⁰ Withers, p. 120.

³¹ Durkacz, pp. 162-63.

³² Clàr 215, pp. 229-30.

MacGregor uses this example from his own Skye parish to demonstrate the need for a bilingual education system, the benefits of which he believed to be equally relevant forty years later in the 1870s. His dialogues tend to provide insights into his views on contemporary social issues and the issue of Gaelic education is no different. In one conversation between Domhnall Bàn and an t-Ard Albannach, Dòmhnall, a schoolmaster, is praised highly for the bilingual education which children in his school receive. 'Tha thu airidh air cliù gach neach aig am bheil gradh d'an duthaich agus d'an cinneach, do bhrìgh gu'm bheil thu a' sparradh eolais air nithibh aimsireil agus spioradail, air an òigridh anns an dà chainnt, agus is taitneach sin r'a fhaicinn'.³³ The character, Dòmhnall Bàn, seems to be based on Donald Whyte, who was schoolmaster at Cullairds in the parish of Dores on the east side of Loch Ness, since reference is made to 'Sgoil a' Chul-ard'. A report in the *Highlander* the previous week contained a brief report to the effect that Whyte's school had been examined by the Rev. Alexander MacGregor and the Rev. James MacNaughton, and here in this Gaelic dialogue, Dòmhnall Bàn thanks An t-Ard-Albannach for publishing this report on his school.³⁴

Only in one article from MacGregor's early period of writing does he devote attention to Gaelic education, compared with numerous dialogues, speeches and letters in the 1870s. This one article, 'Mu Fhoghlum a Thoirt do Chloinn' promotes contemporary educational policy which advocated the use of Gaelic as a means of teaching English, or in the writer's own words, 'co féumail 's a tha léughadh na Gàelìg do chloinn na Gàedhealtachd air son na Béurla a thuigsinn'.³⁵ The editor was sufficiently in agreement with these comments that he added his own analogy on language acquisition, 'agus an Gàedheal sin a tha 'feuchainn ri Béurla ionnsachadh gun chòmhnadh na Gàelìg tha e, an àite dol a stigh air an dorus a ta fosgailte dha, dìreach a' cladhach troimh'n bhalla, no 'streapadh ri mullach an tighe gu dol a stigh air an luidheir'.³⁶ The issue of language was not, however, at the forefront of the

³³ Clàr 161, p. 3.

³⁴ The Rev. James MacNaughton was the Established Church minister in the parish of Dores.

³⁵ Clàr 49, p. 741.

³⁶ Ibid., editorial comment appended to the article.

popular mind in the 1840s as it was to be in the 1880s and this is strongly reflected in MacGregor's writings. It was, however, prominent in the thinking of some educated Gaels in the first part of the century. Caraid nan Gaidheal was aware of the potential of Gaelic as an indirect means of anglicising Highlanders. His biography relates that he published a Gaelic dictionary, 'his object being to afford facilities to the Highland youths when leaving school to acquire a better knowledge of the English language'.³⁷ That some of the foremost Gaelic writers of the nineteenth century were so oriented towards the acquisition of English gives some measure of the strength of the movement to anglicise the Gaelic-speaking area. MacGregor, like the vast majority of his contemporaries, and indeed his predecessors, had been virtually conditioned to accept that Gaelic's sole purpose of existence was as a vehicle to facilitate the expansion of English language and culture.

The views on Gaelic's role in Highland education expounded by Alexander MacGregor were in line with those of the Established Church. The Moderates were unable to disassociate Christianity from English culture and society and thus their ultimate goal was the anglicisation of Gaelic speakers, albeit through Gaelic.³⁸ So, despite his high regard, and indeed love, for his native language, Alexander MacGregor was unquestionably in favour of the steady process of anglicisation which was taking place during the course of his life, believing that it was essential for the long-term spiritual and secular benefit of the Highlands and its inhabitants. Such an attitude would meet with something less than approval today in many quarters, the climate of opinion being more open to the advantages of bilingualism. Considered in the context of the nineteenth century, it can be understood if not agreed with. There are times when his pro-English stance is more apparent than others, partly depending on the purpose of his writing. A dialogue which appeared in the *Highlander* in 1874 seems to promote teaching English to Gaelic-speaking children apparently to the exclusion of Gaelic.³⁹ When Callum a' Ghlinne enquires of the schoolmaster how Highland children can be expected to learn English properly

³⁷ Rev. A. Clerk, *Caraid nan Gaidheal* (Edinburgh, 1899), p. xxxiii.

³⁸ Durkacz, p. 99.

³⁹ Clàr 150.

unless they understand what they are saying, there is no mention of Gaelic being used to explain the English, presumably because English is becoming so common throughout the Highlands that children will have sufficient opportunity to hear it used both in and out of the school. On the face of it this contradicts MacGregor's support for a system of education which would teach both languages. However, a closer examination of this particular dialogue indicates that the writer's purpose was to emphasise the necessity of sending children to school, albeit one where English only was taught, in the wake of the 1872 Act. Callum is so aggrieved about the exclusion of Gaelic from the new school in the glen that he is considering keeping all his children at home, until advised in the dialogue by the schoolmaster that this would be illegal. The apparently anti-Gaelic argument is in actual fact one in favour of education, rather than one against Gaelic, and is attributable to a desire to ensure that Gaels were not put off sending their children to schools where English was the sole language.

School Boards, put in place by the 1872 Act to oversee education provision at a local level, were at the receiving end of much attention in the pages of the *Highlander*. There were two main reasons for this. The first was the 1875 Extension and Code which made little more than minimal provision for Gaelic in those areas in which the language was spoken, and by doing so, highlighted this deficiency, as it was perceived by many. The second was the circular sent by the Scotch Education Department to all School Boards in the Highlands in 1876. The purpose of this circular was to ascertain the attitudes of these Boards towards education being provided in Gaelic and the feasibility of this in terms of teacher availability. The results were certainly revealing. In the first place 13 of the 103 School Boards did not reply to the Circular. Of those which did reply 65 were in favour of instruction in Gaelic and 25 opposed it.⁴⁰ The letters page of the *Highlander* can further illuminate these responses. In a letter entitled 'Gailig air a cumail as na sgoiltean', Màiri Ribeach writes of the Education Department's Circular, 'Tha sinne moran de pharantaibh Gaidhealach 'san sgìreachd so is cha chuala sinne iomradh air a leithid do cheist a bhi

⁴⁰ 'The reply of School Boards to the Circular of the Scotch Education Department on the subject of teaching Gaelic', *An G.*, 65 (1877), 155-60.

air a cuir ri buird nan sgoile gus an do leugh sinn anns a phaipear agaibhs' e. Earraghaidhealaich ag ràdh, cha 'n 'eil toil na tlachd againne teagasg Ghailig a thabhairt do ar cuid cloinne!⁴¹ This testimony confirms what *An Gaidheal* has to say about the circular:

That the inquiry of the Department was meant not to elicit facts regarding the extent to which Gaelic was spoken, but to ascertain the opinions of School Boards upon the desirableness of giving instruction in Gaelic. This explains the anomalous fact that some of the most purely Gaelic-speaking parishes in the Highlands are returned as against instruction being given in that language - e.g., Coll, Glengarry, Glenshiel, Lochcarron, Sleat, Strath.⁴²

Clearly, the opinions proffered by School Boards in response to the Education Department's enquiries were not necessarily the views of the Gaels whose children were being educated in the Boards' schools.

It is no coincidence then that MacGregor's strongest indictment of School Boards in general appears in the issue of *An Gaidheal* immediately following that in which the responses to the Circular were published. It appears in dialogue form with Murachadh and Coinneach discussing the School Board meeting which Murachadh has attended. The business of the meeting has been to select two schoolmasters for two new schools. Of the five Board members present only two, Murachadh being one of them, are in favour of the new teachers being Gaelic speakers. Against Gaelic, and typical of the type of person to be on a School Board, was the new factor who believed that the Gaelic language was nothing but 'uncouth, wild, barbarous, senseless, gibberish'.⁴³ MacGregor ensures that he is firmly put in his place by Fear Choiremhuiltin who is in favour of employing a Gaelic speaking teacher. Once again MacGregor used the dialogue as a means of informing and directing a Gaelic readership, demonstrating by example not how a School Board in a Gaelic-speaking area *should* function, but the reality of how many may well have been dominated by non-Gaels or those who believed in extirpating the language. The reader is left in no doubt that Murachadh, an upstanding Gael who is in favour of both Gaelic and English being taught, is an ideal Board member and that there should be no place for

⁴¹ Mairi Ribeach 'Gailig air a cumail as na sgoiltean', *TH*, 26 May 1877, p. 3.

⁴² 'The reply of School Boards . . . ' p. 155.

⁴³ Clàr 121, pp. 163-64.

those who had no understanding of the Gaels and their language. MacGregor's comments on School Boards did not stop at this. Addressing the Great Celtic Demonstration, held in recognition of Charles Fraser-Mackintosh's services to Highland education in April 1878, MacGregor stated clearly

Let all parties concerned see that the proper men are returned at the next election of School Boards, men pledged to have our native language taught in our own schools throughout the Highlands and Islands. This cannot be too strongly insisted on.⁴⁴

The election of School Board members was in the hands of the rate-payers and it was these voters whom MacGregor sought to influence both in this address and in the dialogue discussed above. In this he and John Murdoch shared a common goal. The pages of the *Highlander* abound with articles, letters and poems on the issue of Gaelic, education and School Boards. In the run-up to the election of School Board members in 1879 one article encourages readers to elect people who will find a way of having Gaelic taught in every school in the Highlands,

Gabhaibh ris na thubhairt sinn, eiribh gu fearail an guaillibh a cheile agus thugaibh mach buaidh neo fhuilteach a bhitheas moran nis urramaiche agus nis buannachdaile dhuibh fein agus d'ar cuid cloinne na ged a dhortadh sibh ur fuil a marbhadh dhaoine dubha no odhar, no a creachadh Africa, no nan Innsean.⁴⁵

Equally exhortatory in tone is a poem published in the *Highlander*, 'A' Ghàidhlig 's na Sgoiltean' by Gilleasbaig MacIain, from which the following two verses are taken,

Mor-mhasladh do gach comhlan
Tha air ar cainnt ri foirneart
'S nach ceadaich bhi aig oigridh
Thoir sgoil' le ciall doibh

.
Duisgibh, Bhaird, le 'r teanganna,
Is thoiribh sgiursadh smearail dhoibh,
Is sinibh orr' le sgeigearachd
A ghreadas gus a bheo iad.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Clàr 215, p. 229

⁴⁵ 'Buid nan Sgoilean', *TH*, 28 February 1879, p. 5.

⁴⁶ Gilleasbaig MacIain, 'A' Ghaidhlig 's na Sgoilean', *TH*, 2 June 1877, p. 3.

MacGregor was thus amongst a number of writers who actively contributed to the *Highlander's* campaign in support of Gaelic education. In addition to emphasising the need for Gaelic to be taught in Highland Schools he was equally concerned with one of the prerequisites for this, that appropriate members be elected to School Boards in Gaelic speaking areas. A further concern which he expressed in his writing was the necessity of establishing a Chair of Celtic at Edinburgh University in order to address the shortage of Gaelic-speaking ministers and teachers and to improve the linguistic abilities of those who already spoke Gaelic. The campaign to establish this Chair was being spearheaded by John Stuart Blackie, Professor of Greek at the University during the 1870s and into the 1880s, raising the £14 000 necessary for the endowment of the Chair, to which Donald MacKinnon was appointed in 1883.⁴⁷ To MacGregor, this Chair offered opportunities other than the researching of a venerable Celtic past - 'a professor conducting his classes, not solely in the digging up of dry philological roots, but likewise in the reading, and spelling, and writing of our Scottish Gaelic according to its beautiful grammatical structure, and its authorised standard'.⁴⁸ He saw this as 'the only effectual remedy' for the linguistic deficiencies of Highland ministers and teachers.⁴⁹

MacGregor's writings which touch on the position of Gaelic within the education system focus solely on formal education and overlook the informal forces at work on educating the Gaels, namely the Gaelic community itself, with its tales, proverbs and lore and practical knowledge. In his *Report* of 1866, Alexander Nicolson referred to the disappearance of this informal system of education, and writes, 'the old substitute for such mental food [secular literature] in the shape of the oral literature of song and story, is dying out with marvellous rapidity'.⁵⁰ MacGregor makes reference to the wisdom and intelligence of the Gaels as revealed in their tales and proverbs, but makes no explicit reference to this as a form of education.⁵¹ It was of course a wholly Gaelic education as opposed to that which formal education

⁴⁷ For further details about the fund-raising see Gillies 'A Century of Gaelic Scholarship', pp. 12-14.

⁴⁸ Clàr 224, p. 285.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 284.

⁵⁰ *Report on the State of Education in the Hebrides*, p. 131.

⁵¹ Clàr 208, p. 4.

offered. Education, as far as Alexander MacGregor and indeed any member of the establishment was concerned, was founded on economic advancement, literacy and on English, thus excluding traditional oral forms of Gaelic instruction from its parameters. That is not to say that MacGregor did not value oral tradition, rather that he believed it did not equip Gaels with the skills which an anglicised education system could. His attitude to the use of English and Gaelic are reflected in his own choice of language in his writing. For the most he employed Gaelic when writing to educate and instruct those less well educated Gaels, whereas English he used to write for those educated Gaels (and non-Gaels) who were more his intellectual equals, for example to write essays on history, superstitions and on the Highland economy. He was a writer at a linguistic and cultural interface, and in consequence, his choice of language for his writing varied according to his subject matter and his intended audience, just as it would when dealing with parishioners face to face.

Alexander MacGregor's views on Gaelic were not unique for their time. Rather his writings express views which were very much in line with those expressed by many of his contemporaries. Leaving aside MacGregor's undoubted affection for his native language, his interest in the language was two-fold. Firstly, Gaelic was the language of the Gaels' past and was thus a means of accessing all aspects of their culture and history, at a time when the history of the Gaels was attracting an unprecedented amount of interest. Secondly, he strongly believed in the practical need for Gaelic-speaking children to receive part of their education through the medium of Gaelic in order to make their education, and indeed their acquisition of English, meaningful. Had he lived until 1885 when Gaelic was made a specific subject he would doubtless have been pleased to see 'cainnt Oisein agus Fhinn' placed alongside Latin and Greek in the Scottish education system.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has demonstrated how the nineteenth century Gaelic periodical press afforded Alexander MacGregor the opportunity to communicate with a wider audience than the limited one available to him from his pulpit. In drawing together the conclusions of the preceding chapters it seems that he was not so much a man who shaped events, but who was shaped by them and who developed as a writer to accommodate changes which were taking place in society. As has been demonstrated, he was one of the most prolific writers of prose in the nineteenth century - possibly the most prolific - and as such would have been one of the role models for those writers who followed him. This of course requires qualification since he was a somewhat shadowy role model, concealed by three pen-names and the scattered nature of his writings. Although there were clearly those among his contemporaries who were aware of his identity, MacGregor's literary identity for the most part remains concealed, without the benefit of a collection of his writings as exists for Caraid nan Gaidheal.

MacGregor wrote on a wide range of subjects, distilling the knowledge which he acquired from his own reading in English, and presented it with great clarity of expression for his readers. Where Caraid nan Gaidheal can be credited with groundbreaking writing in the late 1820s, MacGregor was his heir in many ways, from the subjects on which he chose to write, to the forms and style which he employed. Yet MacGregor went further, experimenting with a wider range of styles than Caraid nan Gaidheal. In common with other contemporary writers of Gaelic, he employed existing models of language use, both written and oral, to shape a written standard of Gaelic appropriate for the discussion of a range of subject matter. Aspects of his form and style reflect the oral environment (not to the exclusion of written influences) in which nineteenth century Gaelic prose writing was emerging both in terms of the stylistic models upon which he could draw and in terms of the potential requirements of an audience which might be either reading or listening to his work. One of the outstanding features of his style is his ability to explain difficult concepts, such as astronomy, with a clarity which made the subject accessible to Gaels. Having

seen how much he favoured the prose dialogue as a means of discussing a whole range of topics this throws up a number of questions, among them the reasons for the prominence of the dialogue in nineteenth century Gaelic prose which this thesis has considered briefly. This is clearly an area of study which merits further work, particularly with regard to the changing use of the dialogue in the course of the nineteenth century, and its survival even down to the late twentieth century.¹

MacGregor's writing was aimed at two different audiences, between which there would have been considerable overlap. His Gaelic writings were primarily intended for the increasing number of literate Gaels, whose formal education would have gone little beyond the basics of literacy, and these writings are generally didactic and/or religious in nature, with the secondary purpose of entertainment. What we therefore have is something similar to the taigh-céilidh, providing informal education and entertainment on a range of topics, but incorporating aspects of preaching. While not explicitly designed to compete with the taigh-céilidh tradition, these journals may have indirectly contributed to its demise, since they did not depend upon an audience, but could be read by the individual. MacGregor's writings in English, on the other hand, are far less dependent on English sources than are those in Gaelic (with the exception of *Highland Superstitions*, as discussed in Chapter 7) and are generally of a less didactic and less religious nature, and aimed at non-Gaels and those educated Gaels like himself who were interested in matters of history and tradition. They reflect the developing antiquarian interest in Gaelic culture and traditions, rather than any attempt to perpetuate them. That it not to say that these two audiences were mutually exclusive, far from it, but MacGregor's choice of language indicates his consciousness of these two distinct audiences.

In Gaelic, whether writing moral tales or accounts of emigration or Highland folklore, MacGregor was equipping his readers to be part of a wider world than that of the Highlands. In a sense his Gaelic writings involved him in the process of anglicisation. Given that one of the effects of Gaelic schools in the Highlands was to stimulate demand for the teaching of English, as has been discussed by Charles

¹ See for example *West Highland Free Press*, 10 January 1997, p. 3. On this occasion Iain Moireasdan departs from the usual prose form of his column and writes a dialogue on topical issues.

Withers, it would be reasonable to suggest that a possible corollary of providing varied reading matter in Gaelic, as MacGregor and contemporary writers did, was the creation of demand for reading matter in English, at the very least by virtue of the relative dearth of Gaelic literature.² Taking anglicisation as being, in part, the imposition of English cultural values, this is to be found in his moral tales, which tended to reflect the economic realities of the English speaking world as much as those of the Gaelic world. Another instance of this imposition of English, or perhaps British, cultural assumptions is with regard to the imperial ideology which occasionally surfaces in his work, reminding Gaels how fortunate they are to live under the enlightened laws of Britain, and also that the overseas colonies such as Canada, to which they may emigrate, are still governed by these judicious laws. Rather than being a deliberate attempt to anglicise on his part, this is indicative of the extent to which he himself had been anglicised and had adopted English cultural values.

As a Highland minister he enjoyed the benefits of an upbringing as a Gael and also a Lowland university education, factors germinal in his writing. He had attended university in the first half of the nineteenth century before the introduction of more specialist study, and thus his education would have been general, incorporating philosophy, language and science.³ This breadth of education is evident in the wide range of subjects on which he chose to write. It has also emerged in the course of this thesis that MacGregor was not one to engage in intellectual debate with his peers on any subject. There is nothing to suggest that he was possessed of any exceptional intellectual abilities, rather he was an educated man who sought to pass on to others the benefits of his own education and reading.

Another way of viewing his writing, instead of as a vehicle of anglicisation, and perhaps a view which is a fairer representation of his own intentions, is that he was an *interpreter* for both Gaels and non-Gaels. He describes emigrant destinations, reveals the horrors of slavery, explains the basics of astronomy, promotes personal 'improvement' and advocates learning English as a means of social advancement. His

² Charles W. J. Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland 1698-1981* (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 147.

³ See George E. Davie, *The Democratic Intellect* (Edinburgh, 1961), pp. 3-25.

writings in English tend to have a more academic tone, discussing the economic and social problems afflicting the Highlands, discussing popular beliefs as one who does not believe in them, considering aspects of Highland history. All this points to an important role at the interface between two cultures. On the one hand he interpreted the outside world for the Gaels, aiming to better equip them for life in an increasingly anglicised and rapidly changing society. On the other hand he interpreted economic, cultural and historical aspects of the Highlands for the outside world. This interpretive role is further demonstrated by his translations from English into Gaelic.

This new-found role can be better understood when one considers how the position of the moderate minister had changed, particularly as a consequence of the Disruption. The role of the minister as an interpreter of God's Word had weakened with the translation of the Bible into Gaelic. With rising levels of literacy in the Highlands, Gaels were better equipped to access the Scriptures for themselves. This, along with diminishing congregations as evangelicals tended to the spiritual needs of many Gaels, may have resulted in a man like MacGregor feeling the need to seek a fresh outlet for his teaching. In *Caraid nan Gaidheal* he had a role model who, through his dialogues and letters, had introduced Gaels to the outside world, whether that of the Lowlands or further afield. In his fund-raising on behalf of famine-stricken Gaels, *Caraid nan Gaidheal* can be seen as forcing the Highlands upon the social conscience of the outside world. MacGregor had performed this sort of intermediary function during the famines of the 1840s when he used his position to highlight the plight of the Gaels and to petition external agencies on their behalf. Taking the other side of the coin, he promoted emigration to Gaels as the most viable means of solving the crisis of famine and over-population. What has been seen by some commentators as a failure on the part of the clergy to criticise landlords can be viewed, through what we know of MacGregor, as a balancing act in attempting to serve two masters - tenantry and landlord. Overall, his writings in English represent an attempt to present the case of the Gaels, whether in time of famine or in the 1870s, when writing on subjects of a more antiquarian nature, and to dispel external prejudiced perceptions of the Highlands. He is also to be found portraying the Highlands in the romantic terms with which travellers to the Highlands described

them, appreciating the scenery, for example, with the eye of one who has read Sir Walter Scott.

Much research remains to be done on the activities of the numerous members of the clergy, from all denominations, in this sort of interpretive role during the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, whether as collectors of folklore material or writers of Gaelic prose, and in Alexander MacGregor we have an example of a man who did both, and who along with Caraid nan Gaidheal determined to a great extent the path which Gaelic prose followed in the course of the nineteenth century.

The work listed below was written by MacGregor under three pen-names, John S. and Alexander Russell, in addition to some in English for which he assumed no pen-name. As evidence that these three pen-names were in fact those used by him, I cite a short piece from the obituary for him which appeared in the *Gaelic Magazine* of December 1881:

He contributed largely to 'Cuairtear nan Glean', edited by Ole Magnus MacLeod. Most of his contributions are signed 'Sgùthach', or 'Alexander Russell', but many are only signed 'S.', and in several cases, but of all, not 20. This, therefore, does not attempt to identify which of the many anonymous contributions to the various journals may have been his.

Those entries marked by an asterisk (*) are to be found in *Full or Approximate List I*. In the course of the thesis, references to MacGregor's work are here given in terms of this catalogue and take the form, e.g. QGR 141, p. 1.

ARTICLES, DIALOGUES AND SPEECHES

QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURE

1. On the causes of the late Destruction of Food in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in the years 1836 and 1837.
Alexander MacGregor 9 (1836), 139-49.
[ed. Nov. 215-27, 231, & 232]
2. On the advantages of a government grant for emigration from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.
Alexander MacGregor 11 (1838), 241-52.

CUAIRTEAR NAN GLEAN

3. Egidh nan Sgùthach a' dèiligeadh airson an t-Sgùthach.
S. 22 (1840), 304-13.
4. Air an obair nan tighichean ann an t-Sgùthach.
S. 27 (1840), 141.
5. M. Macgregor's dialogue nan Gaidheal air t-Sgùthach.
Sgùthach 27 (1840), 145-49.

APPENDIX 1

CATALOGUE OF THE PROSE WRITINGS OF THE REV. ALEXANDER MACGREGOR

This catalogue lists all known writings by Alexander MacGregor. Articles, dialogues and speeches are listed chronologically by the journals in which they were published, followed by sermons, books, translations into Gaelic and letters. Where a piece of writing has been republished at a later date, without change, this information has been noted underneath the original catalogue entry. If any substantial change has been made - i.e. sections added or deleted - this is included as a separate entry in the catalogue and cross-referenced to the original entry.

The work listed below was written by MacGregor under three pen names, Sgiathanach, S. and Alasdair Ruadh, in addition to some in English for which he assumes no pen-name. As evidence that these three pen-names were in fact those used by him, I cite a short piece from the obituary for him which appeared in the *Celtic Magazine* of December 1881:

He contributed largely to 'Cuairtear nan Gleann', edited by Old Norman MacLeod. Most of his contributions are signed 'Sgiathanach', or 'Alasdair Ruadh', but many are only signed 'S.', and in several cases, not at all. (p. 96)

This thesis does not attempt to identify which of the many anonymous contributions to the various journals may have been his.

Those entries marked by an asterisk (*) are to be found in full in Appendices 2 and 3. In the course of the thesis, references to MacGregor's writings are given as items in this catalogue and take the form, e.g. Clàr 141, p. 3.

ARTICLES, DIALOGUES AND SPEECHES

QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURE

1. On the causes of the late Destitution of Food in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in the years 1836 and 1837.
Alexander MacGregor 9 (1838), 159-99.
[cf. Nos 225-27, 231, & 232]

2. On the advantages of a government grant for emigration from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland
Alexander MacGregor 11 (1840), 257-97.

CUAIRTEAR NAN GLEANN

3. Sgeul bheag mu theaghlach a chaidh air imrich do Chanada.
S. 5 (1840), 108-13.

4. Aireamh nan roimh-aithrichean aig neach.
S. 6 (1840), 147.

5. Mu thimchioll imrich nan Gaidheal do dh'America
Sgiathanach 7 (1840), 145-49.

6. An cìs-sheachnaiche
Sgiathanach 8 (1840), 169-73.
7. Creach eadar fhineacha Gaidhealach
Sgiathanach 12 (1841), 275-77.
- 8.(a) Air cruinn-chorpaibh soillseach nan speur Earrainn I
Sgiathanach 13, (1841), 11-14
(b) Reprinted: *An G.*, 9 (1872), 225-28.
9. Air dìteadh gu bàs gun dearbhadh soilleir
Sgiathanach 13 (1841), 22-24.
- 10.(a) Air cruinn-chorpaibh nan speur Earrainn II
Sgiathanach 15 (1841), 70-73
(b) Reprinted: *An G.*, Air. 10 (1872), 251-53.
- 11.(a) Air cruinn-mheallabh (*sic*) soillseach nan speur Earrainn III
Sgiathanach 16 (1841), 109-12
(b) Reprinted: *An G.*, 11 (1873), 279-81.
(c) Reprinted: (in part) in William J. Watson, *Rosg Gàidhlig: Specimens of Gaelic Prose* (Inverness, 1915), pp. 8-10.
12. Am bruadar
Sgiathanach 17 (1841), 133-35.
13. An cleasaiche air fhiosrachadh le peanas
Sgiathanach 17 (1841), 148-49.
- 14.(a) Air cruinn-mheallabh (*sic*) soillseach nan speur Earrainn IV
Sgiathanach 20 (1841), 160-63.
(b) Reprinted: *An G.*, 12 (1873), 307-09.
15. Fionnghal, Nighean Raonuill Mhic-Aonghais Oig agus Prionnsa Tearlach
Sgiathanach 20 (1841), 224-28.
16. Air meanbh-bheathaichibh na cruitheachd
Sgiathanach 22 (1841), 284-86.
17. A' bhan-Israelach bheag. Sgeul airson na h-òigridh
Sgiathanach 25 (1842), 1-6.
- 18.(a) Sgeul air na thachair ann am Bliadhna Thearlaich
Sgiathanach 27 (1842), 81-84.
(b) Reprinted: *An G.*, 33 (1874), 279-81.

(c)

Reprinted: *TH*, 20 February 1880.

19. An seann duine agus na h-oganaich
Sgiathanach 28 (1842), 111.
[cf. No. 33]
20. Earail do na Gaidheil mu'n Chuairtear
Sgiathanach 29 (1842), 115-20.
21. Air seana chleachd Sgiathanach
Sgiathanach 30 (1842), 156-58.
[cf. No. 221]
22. Air droch chleachdannaibh
Sgiathanach 31 (1842), 192-93.
23. An seangan *
Sgiathanach 36 (1843), 327-31.
24. Mu sheòladh thairis air crios-meadhoin na talmhainn
Sgiathanach 38 (1843), 41-47.
25. Mortadh Iain Stiùbhairt Morair Lathuirne
Sgiathanach 40 (1843), pp. 110-13.

NEW STATISTICAL ACCOUNT OF SCOTLAND vol. 14
(Edinburgh, 1845).

26. Parish of Kilmuir
Alexander MacGregor pp. 237-87.

FEAR-TATHAICH NAM BEANN

27. Earail do na Gaidheil mu Fhear-tathaich nam Beann
Sgiathanach 5 (1848), 147-50.
28. Cunntas air Eilean Eoin an America mu Thuath Earrann I
Sgiathanach 6 (1848), 176-80.
29. Cunntas air Eilean Eoin an America mu Thuath Earrann II
Sgiathanach 7 (1848), 204-08.
30. Cunntas air Ceap Bretoin an America mu Thuath
Sgiathanach 8 (1848), 231-41.
31. Am Biobull
Sgiathanach 10 (1848), 302-05.

32. Nithe iongantach air an leigeadh ris mu'n Bhiobull
Sgiathanach 12 (1848), 364-65.
33. An seann duine agus na h-oganaich
Sgiathanach 14 (1849), 430-35.
[cf. No. 19]
34. Amanna fuilteach o shean ann an Gaidhealtachd na h-Alba Earrann I
Sgiathanach 15 (1849), 463-65.
[cf. No. 67]
- 35.(a) Amanna fuilteach o shean ann an Gaidhealtachd na h-Alba Earrann II
Sgiathanach 16 (1849), 495-97.
(b) Reprinted: *An G.*, 20 (1873), 245-47.
[cf. No. 96]
36. Eachdraidh ghoirid mu Choganna na Frainge - Mortadh Louis XVI Earrann I
Sgiathanach 16 (1849), 491-94.
37. Comhairlean do luchd-imirich 'dh'ionnsuidh America *
Sgiathanach 17 (1849), 516-22.
38. Gearr chunntas mu thraillealachd na daorsa ann an caochladh linnean agus
chearnan den t-saoghal Earrann I
S. 18 (1849), 535-46.
- 39.(a) An coral
Sgiathanach 18 (1849), 553-57.
(b) Reprinted: *An G.*, 24 (1874), 353-57.
40. Gearr chunntas mu thraillealachd na daorsa ann an caochladh linnean agus
chearnan den t-saoghal Earrann II
S. 19 (1849), 567-76.
41. Truailidheachd an duine air a dhearbhadh bho oibribh naduir
S. 19 (1849), 576-80.
42. An t-or cheàrd
S. 19 (1849), 580-83.
[cf. No. 75]
43. An t-Innseanach 'an Albuinn
S. 21 (1849), 631-40.
- 44.(a) Larach Ninebheh
S. 21 (1849), 640-46.

- (b) Reprinted in two parts: *An G.*, 26 (1874), 44-47.
- (c) *An G.*, 27 (1874), 84-86.
45. Dleas'nas nan uile trocair a nochdadh do aon a cheile
Sgiathanach 21 (1849), 653-54.
 46. Tighean-peanais nam Papanach
S. 22 (1849), 679-84.
 47. Cleireach Baile Ephesus
S. 23 (1849), 700-04.
 48. Teagasgan gliocais
Sgiathanach 23 (1849), 717-18.
 49. Mu fhoghlum a thoirt do chloinn
S. 24 (1850), 741-45.
 50. Sir Ian Franklin
S. 24 (1850), 746-50.
- SCOTTISH PRESS**
51. The lays and laments of the Gaels
Alexander MacGregor 1852, pp. 1-4
- AN GAIDHEAL**
52. Failte o'n Sgiathanach
Sgiathanach 7 (1872), 176-78.
 53. Sgeulachdan O'n Sgiathanach
Sgiathanach 8 (1872), 209.
 54. Pat O' Connor
Sgiathanach 10 (1872), 257-59.
 55. Air cruinn-mheallaibh soillseach nan speur V
Sgiathanach 13 (1873), 4-6.
 56. An seol air an deanar airgiod
Sgiathanach 13 (1873), 13.
 57. An Gaidheal dileas
Sgiathanach 14 (1873), 43-44.

58. Air cruinn-mheallaibh soillseach nan speur VI
Sgiathanach 14 (1873), 45-47.
59. Air cruinn-mheallaibh soillseach nan speur VII
Sgiathanach 15 (1873), 65-67.
60. Na bancaichean caomhnaidh
Alasdair Ruadh 15 (1873), 70-72.
61. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 16 (1873), 102-06.
62. Air cruinn-mheallaibh soillseach nan speur VIII
Alasdair Ruadh 16 (1873), 108-10.
- 63.(a) Air cruinn-mheallaibh soillseach nan speur IX
Alasdair Ruadh 17 (1873), 129-31.
(b) Reprinted: (in part) Watson, *Rosg Gàidhlig*:
pp. 10-14.
64. Ainmhidhean
Alasdair Ruadh 17 (1873), 146-47.
65. Air cruinn-mheallaibh soillseach nan speur X
Sgiathanach 18 (1873), 161-63.
66. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 18 (1873), 170-75.
67. Sgeulachd
Sgiathanach 19 (1873), 210-12.
[cf. No. 34.]
68. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 20 (1873), 232-37.
69. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 21 (1873), 258-62.
70. Sonas nan ainmhidh agus nan eun
Sgiathanach 21 (1873), 271-72.
71. Nithe nuadh agus sean
S. 21 (1873), 272.

72. Aidhleacan ann an China
Sgiathanach 23 (1874), 332-33.
73. Sgeul beag iongantach
Alasdair Ruadh 24 (1874), 367-68.
74. Na Morairean-Dearg agus an t-Sabaid
S. 24 (1874), 372-73.
75. An t-òr-cheàrd
Sgiathanach 25 (1874), 4-6.
[cf. No. 42]
76. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 25 (1874), 13-18.
77. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 26 (1874), 49-55.
78. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 28 (1874), 112-16.
79. Lachlunn Mac Thearlaich Oig - Am Bard Sgiathanach
Sgiathanach 28 (1874), 120-21.
[cf. No.220]
80. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 29 (1874), 136-42.
81. Lachlunn Mac Thearlaich Oig - Am Bard Sgiathanach (air leantuinn)
Sgiathanach 29 (1874), 145-48.
[cf. No. 220]
82. An t-earrach
S. 30 (1874), 187.
83. Crionntachd
S. 30 (1874), 187.
- 84.(a) Saobh-chrabhadh anns na h-Innsibh
Sgiathanach 31 (1874), 201-03.
(b) Reprinted: *TH*, 23 April 1880.
85. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair *
Alasdair Ruadh 31 (1874), 207-12.

86. Briathra cairdeal
S. 31 (1874), 212.
87. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 32 (1874), 233-38.
88. Mac na bantraich
Sgiathanach 32 (1874), 246-48.
89. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair *
Alasdair Ruadh 33 (1874), 272-77.
90. Comhairle do mhathairichibh
Sgiathanach 33 (1874), 277.
91. An t-Ollamh Seumas Garie
Sgiathanach 33 (1874), 282.
92. Earail do mhuinntir na Gaidhealtachd mu'n Ghaidheal
Sgiathanach 38 (1875), 49-51.
93. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 40 (1875), 102-06.
94. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 42 (1875), 176-81.
95. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 43 (1875), 210-13.
96. Air cleachdannaibh cianail nan Gaidheal anns na h-amannaibh a dh'fhalbh
Sgiathanach 44 (1875), 235-40.
[cf. no. 35]
97. Sop as gach seid
S. 44 (1875), p. 247.
98. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 45 (1875), 263-68.
99. A' chlarsach no 'chruit
Sgiathanach 45 (1875), 275-76.
100. Sop as gach seid
S. 45 (1875), 277.

101. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 46 (1875), 296-301.
102. Ionraic Mac-Ailein *
Sgiathanach 47 (1875), 327-30.
103. An t-Eilean Sgiathanach
Sgiathanach 48 (1875), 363-65.
104. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 49 (1876), 11-14.
105. Am piobair aosda agus a phiob
Sgiathanach 49 (1876), 19-21.
[cf. No. 242]
106. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 50 (1876), 40-44.
107. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 51 (1876), 70-74.
108. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 52 (1876), 105-08.
109. Sop as gach seid
S. 52 (1876), 115-16.
110. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 55 (1876), 196-201.
111. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 57 (1876), 257-61.
- 112.(a) An dilleachdan bochd
Sgiathanach 57, (1876), 264-68.
(b) Reprinted: *TH*, 16 April 1880.
113. Gach ni na 'thrath
Sgiathanach 57 (1876), 268-69.
114. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 59 (1876), 324-28.
115. Caib. III
Sgiathanach 61 (1877), 12-14.

116. An ceannaiche taingeil
Alasdair Ruadh 61 (1877), 21-22.
117. Urnaigh an duine bhoichd
S. 61 (1877), 22-23.
118. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 63 (1877), 72-79.
119. A' chreithleag
Alasdair Ruadh 64 (1877), 107-08.
120. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 65 (1877), 136-39.
121. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair *
Alasdair Ruadh 66 (1877), 161-65.
122. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 67 (1877), 200-203.
123. Litir do'n *Ghaidheal*
Sgiathanach 67, (1877), 206-09.
124. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 68 (1877), 232-35.
125. Sop as gach seid
S. 68 (1877), 247.
126. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 69 (1877), 265-70.
127. Amaideachd agus neo-bhuannachd na feirge
Sgiathanach 69 (1877), 276-78.
128. Dleasnais pharanta
Sgiathanach 69 (1877), 306-07.
129. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 70 (1877) 295-99.
130. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 71 (1877), 332-36.

131. Am fear-lagha agus an fhianuis
Sgiathanach 71 (1877), 337-39.
132. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 72 (1877), 359-62.

HIGHLANDER

133. Earail dhurachdach do shliochd nan gleann Albannach
Sgiathanach 16 May 1873, p. 3.
134. Fionn a's Dubhan
Sgiathanach 28 June 1873, p. 3.
135. Litir
Sgiathanach 9 August 1873, p. 3.
136. Clann an Sgeulaiche
Sgiathanach 23 August 1873, p. 3.
137. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 25 October 1873, p. 2.
138. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 1 November 1873, p. 3.
139. Litir o'n Sgiathanach
Sgiathanach 20 December 1873, p. 3.
140. Ard-Albannach cheanalta
Sgiathanach 7 February 1874, p. 4.
141. Am brìtheamh 's am baillidh gun Ghailig
Sgiathanach 28 February 1874, p. 3.
142. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 21 March 1874, p. 5.
143. An tagradair mor
Sgiathanach 28 March 1874, p. 3.
144. Slan do'n Ard Albannach
Sgiathanach 18 April 1874, p. 3.
145. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 25 April 1874, p. 3.

146. Comhradh eadar am Maighstir Sgoile agus Callum a' Ghlinne
Sgiathanach 2 May 1874, p. 3.
147. Comhradh eadar am Maighstir Sgoile agus Callum a' Ghlinne
Sgiathanach 23 May 1874, p. 3.
148. Comhradh eadar am Maighstir Sgoile agus Callum a' Ghlinne
Sgiathanach 29 August 1874, p. 3.
149. Comhradh eadar am Maighstir Sgoile agus Callum a' Ghlinne
Sgiathanach 12 September 1874, p. 3.
150. Comhradh eadar am Maighstir Sgoile agus Callum a' Ghlinne
Sgiathanach 19 September 1874, p. 3.
151. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 3 October 1874, p. 3.
152. Comhradh eadar am Ministear agus am Maighstir Sgoile
Sgiathanach 10 October 1874, p. 3.
153. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 5 December 1874, p. 3.
154. Comhradh eadar am Maighstir Sgoile agus Callum a' Ghlinne
Sgiathanach 19 December 1874, p. 3.
155. Comhradh eadar Domhnall Og agus am Maighstir Sgoile
Sgiathanach 12 June 1875, p. 3.
156. Comhradh eadar Domhnall Ban agus an t-Ard Albannach
Sgiathanach 14 August 1875, p. 3.
157. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 27 November 1875, p. 3.
158. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 11 December 1875, p. 3.
159. Comhradh eadar Domhnall Ban agus an t-Ard Albannach
Sgiathanach 5 February 1876, p. 3.
160. Comhradh eadar Domhnall Ban agus an t-Ard Albannach
Sgiathanach 19 February 1876, p. 3.

161. Comhradh eadar Domhnall Ban agus an t-Ard Albannach
Sgiathanach 25 March 1876, p. 3.
162. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 20 May 1876, p. 3.
163. Focal no dha do'n Ard Albannach
Sgiathanach 24 June 1876, p. 3.
164. Focal no dha do'n Ard-Albannach
Sgiathanach 1 July 1876, p. 3.
165. Comhradh eadar an t-Ard-Albannach agus Domhnall Ban
Sgiathanach 28 April 1877, p. 3.
166. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 26 May 1877, p. 3.
167. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 18 August 1877, p. 3.
168. Comhradh eadar Domhnall Ban agus an t-Ard-Albannach
Sgiathanach 8 September 1877, p. 3.
169. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 6 October 1877, p. 3.
170. Litir mu rud no dhà
Sgiathanach 13 October 1877, p. 3.
171. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 27 October 1877, p. 3.
172. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 17 November 1877, p. 3.
173. Focal no dha don Ard-Albannach
Sgiathanach 9 February 1878, p. 3.
174. Sgeulachd - 'An druidh'.
Sgiathanach 16 February 1878, p. 3.
175. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 2 March 1878, p. 3.

176. Focal no dha do'n Ard-Albannach / Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 20 April 1878, p. 3.
177. Focal no dha do'n Ard-Albannach / Briathra gliocais
Sgiathanach 6 June 1878, p. 3.
178. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 22 June 1878, p. 3.
179. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair *
Sgiathanach 6 July 1878, p. 3.
180. An t-oganach diadhaidh
Sgiathanach 20 July 1878, p. 3.
181. A' bhoid aig Comunn 'St. George'.
Eadar-th. leis an Sgiathanach 27 July 1878, p. 3.
182. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Sgiathanach 3 August 1878, p. 3.
183. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Sgiathanach 10 August 1878, p. 3.
184. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Sgiathanach 24 August 1878, p. 3.
185. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Sgiathanach 21 September 1878, p. 3.
186. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Sgiathanach 19 October 1878, p. 3.
187. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Sgiathanach 26 October 1878, p. 3.
188. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Sgiathanach 16 November 1878, p. 3.
189. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 21 December 1878, p. 3.
190. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Sgiathanach 18 January 1879, p. 6.

191. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Sgiathanach 14 February 1879, p. 6.
192. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Sgiathanach 2 May 1879, p. 6.
193. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Sgiathanach 16 May 1879, p. 6.
194. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 1 August 1879, p. 6.
195. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 8 August 1879, p. 6.
196. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 5 September 1879, p. 6.
197. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 19 September 1879, p. 6.
198. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 26 September 1879, p. 6.
199. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 10 October 1879, p. 6.
200. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Sgiathanach 17 October 1879, p. 6.
201. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 31 October 1879, p. 6.
202. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 26 December 1879, p. 6.
203. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 22 December 1880, p. 6.
204. Cuil bheag nan glic bhriathar
Sgiathanach 16 February 1881, p. 6.

New Series Volume I

205. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh August 1881, pp. 56-58.

206. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh November 1881, pp. 178-79.

INVERNESS ADVERTISER

207. Lecture delivered by Alexander MacGregor in the Workmen's Club 'The Social and Domestic Manners and Customs of the Hebridean Highlanders in both past and present times with allusions to their Origin, Music, Language, Poetry &c. Part 1' 17 February 1874, p. 3.
208. Part 2 of above 20 February 1874, p. 4.
209. Summary of a lecture delivered by Alexander MacGregor in the Young Men's Christian Association Hall under the auspices of the Highland Railway Literary Society. 'The elements of Nature' 10 December 1880, p. 3.

TRANSACTIONS OF THE GAELIC SOCIETY OF INVERNESS

210. Speech in Gaelic 1 (1871-72), 106-09.
211. Lecture in Gaelic 2 (1872-73), 7-25.
212. Speech in Gaelic 4 (1874-75), 151-52.
213. Speech in Gaelic 6 (1876-77), 40-41.
214. Introductory address 7 (1877-78), 43-51
215. Speech made at the Great Celtic Demonstration
7 (1877-78), 228-32.
216. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Bàn agus Coinneach Ciobair read to the society
8 (1878-79), 9-15.
217. Speech in Gaelic 8 (1878-79), 43-45.
218. Speech in Gaelic 9 (1879-80), 6-7.
219. Speech in English 10 (1881-83), 10-12.

THE CELTIC MAGAZINE

220. Lachlan MacKinnon or 'Lachlan Mac Thearlaich Oig'
Sgiathanach 3 (1876), 91-94.
[cf. Nos 79 & 81]
221. A remarkable feudal custom
Sgiathanach 4 (1876), 119-20.
[cf. No. 21]
222. The first printed Gaelic book
Sgiathanach 5 (1876), 152-55.
223. Craig Phadruig and other vitrified forts in the North of Scotland with
geological remarks.
Alex. MacGregor 7 (1876), 195-202.
224. The Highlands and present position of Highlanders
Alex. MacGregor 9 (1876), 280-86.
225. Destitution in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland I
Alex. MacGregor 16 (1877), 121-28.
[cf. No. 1]
226. Destitution in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland II
Alex. MacGregor 17 (1877), 161-68.
[cf. No. 1]
227. Destitution in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland III
Alex. MacGregor 18 (1877), 214-19.
[cf. No. 1]
228. The last scenes of Flora Macdonald's life, with a variety of collateral
incidents.
Alex. MacGregor 19 (1877), 241-49.
[cf. No. 262]
229. The last scenes of Flora Macdonald's life
Alex. MacGregor 20 (1877), 305-11.
[cf. No. 262]
230. The last scenes of Flora Macdonald's life
Alex. MacGregor 21 (1877), 344-51.
[cf. No. 262]

231. Destitution in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland IV
Alex. MacGregor 22 (1877), 396-402.
[cf. No. 1]
232. Destitution in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland V
Alex. MacGregor 23 (1877), 434-43.
[cf. No. 1]
233. Ancient mythology and modern superstitions I
Alex. MacGregor 25 (1877), 9-15.
[cf. No. 263]
234. Ancient mythology and modern superstitions II
Alex. MacGregor 26 (1877), 50-58.
[cf. No. 263]
235. Ancient mythology and modern superstitions III
Alex. MacGregor 27 (1878), 96-103.
[cf. No. 263]
236. John Macdonald - An adherent of Prince Charles
Alex. MacGregor 36 (1878), 462-66.
237. Highland and Island scenery I
Alex. MacGregor 43 (1879), 240-48.
238. Highland and Island scenery II
Alex. MacGregor 44 (1879), 281-89.
239. The early scenes of Flora Macdonald's life, with several incidental allusions
to the adventures and escapes of the unfortunate Prince Charles Edward
Stuart
Alex. MacGregor 48 (1879), 441-47.
[cf. No. 262]
240. The early scenes of Flora Macdonald's life II
Alex. MacGregor 50 (1879), 52-59.
[cf. No. 262]
241. The early scenes of Flora Macdonald's life III
Alex. MacGregor 52 (1880), 138-43.
242. The aged piper and his bagpipe
Alex. MacGregor 58 (1880), 404-05.
[cf. No. 105]

243. The government factor and the widow's cow
Alex. MacGregor 59 (1880), 426-29.
244. The early scenes of Flora Macdonald's life IV
Alex. MacGregor 60 (1880), 475-82.
[cf. No. 262]
245. The early scenes of Flora Macdonald's life V
Alex. Mac Gregor 61 (1880), 16-23.
[cf. No. 262]
246. The early scenes of Flora Macdonald's life VI
Alex. MacGregor 62 (1880), 68-73.
[cf. No. 262]
247. Letter entitled 'Principal Shairp, a Highlander,
Alex. MacGregor 65 (1881), 203-04.
248. The early scenes of Flora Macdonald's life VII
Alex. MacGregor 68 (1881), 314-20.
[cf. No. 262]
249. The early scenes of Flora Macdonald's life IV
Alex. MacGregor 69 (1881), 349-56.
[cf. No. 262]
250. The early scenes of Flora Macdonald's life IV
Alex. MacGregor 71 (1881), 442-51.
[cf. No. 262]
251. An "Sgiathanach" coir an Lunainn
Sgiathanach 72 (1881), 484-85.
252. The Isle of Skye in the olden times
Alex. MacGregor 73 (1881), 19-23.

***PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUITIES OF
SCOTLAND***

253. Notes on some old customs in the Isle of Skye
By Rev. Alex. McGregor, M.A., . . . communicated by Alexander Ross Esq.
F.S.A. Scot., Inverness
14 (1879-1880), 143-47.

THE NORTHERN CHRONICLE

254. Briathra gliocais
Sgiathanach 2 February 1881.
255. Briathra gliocais
Sgiathanach 22 June 1881.
256. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 27 July 1881.
- 257 Letter concerning descendents of Flora Macdonald
10 August, 1881.
258. Cuil bheag nan glic-bhriathar
Sgiathanach 17 August 1881.
259. Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair
Alasdair Ruadh 21 September 1881.
260. Cuil bheag nan glic bhriathar
Sgiathanach 12 October 1881.

SERMONS

261. Gràdh chrìosd d'a mhuinntir féin
Sguaban a achaidhean nan aithrichean Church of Scotland, Free Church of Scotland, (Edinburgh, 1946), pp. 65-69.

BOOKS

262. *The life of Flora Macdonald and her adventures with Prince Charlie* (Inverness, 1882).
[cf. Nos 228-30, 239-41, 244-46 & 248-50]
263. *Highland Superstitions* (Inverness, 1891).
Reprinted: Stirling. 1922 & 1931
[cf. Nos. 233-35]
264. *The feuds of the clans. Together with the history of the feuds and conflicts among the clans in the northern parts of Scotland and in the Western Isles from the year MXXXI unto MDCXIX.* (Stirling, 1907).
[Preface states, 'The first part of this book was written by the late Rev. Alexander MacGregor, M.A., on 21st October, 1875, and delivered as a lecture to the Working Men's Club at Inverness on 19th November, 1875. The second part is from a MS. written in the reign of King James VI., and first published in 1764 by Messrs. Foulis, Glasgow. . .']

TRANSLATIONS INTO GAELIC

265. *An seòl air an glacair agus an greidhear an sgadan agus air an greidhear an trosg, an langa, an tràille, agus am falmaire* (Edinburgh, 1846).
Translation of *Directions for Taking and Curing Herrings* by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder. Text in Gaelic and English.
266. *Beagan fhocal comhairle do mharaichibh Shasuinn . . . le caraid a' mharaiche*
(Edinburgh, 1854).
Translation of *A Few words of advice to the mariners of England* by Samuel Baker. Text in Gaelic and English.
267. *Apocripha*; air eadar-theangachadh air son a' cheud uair o'n Bheurla ghnàthaichte chum na Gàelic Albannaich. (London, 1860).
Translation of *Apocrypha* at the request of Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte.

PUBLISHED CORRESPONDENCE (letters published in journals and newspapers are found listed under the title of the publications in which they appeared).

268. Letter to Sir George Grey, Home Secretary, 27 October 1846 in *Correspondence from July 1846 to February 1847, relating to the Measures adopted for the Relief of the Distress in Scotland 1847 LIII*. pp. 144-45.
269. Letter to Rev. Dr. M'Leod, Glasgow, 29 December 1846 in *Extracts from letters to the Rev. Dr. M'Leod, Glasgow, regarding the famine and destitution in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1847), pp. 5-7. *

UNPUBLISHED CORRESPONDENCE

270. Letter to Robert Blackwood, 30 June 1840
NLS, Blackwood Papers MS. 4052.
271. Letter to Sir John Atholl MacGregor, 29 June 1843
Central Region Archives, MacGregor Papers, Bundle 194.
272. Letter to the Reverend Dr. Forbes, 22 October 1844
SRO, GD1/537/1-4.
273. Letter in Gaelic to Lady MacDonald, 6mh do Mhios mu dheireadh an fhogharaidh 1848
MacDonald Estate Papers (held by Clan Donald Trust), GD221/5546/5.

274. Letter to Captain Smith, R.N., Portree, 24 February 1849 *
SRO, HD 14/21.
275. Letter to Captain Smith, R. N., 24 March 1849 *
SRO, HD 14/21.
276. Letter to Dr. Matheson, Portree 5 July 1849
SRO, HD 14/21.
277. Letter to Mrs MacGregor, 125 Park Street, Grosvenor Square, London, July
1856
NLS, Adv. 73.1.7.
278. Letter to the Rev. Dr. Macdonald, Hillpark, Inverness, 10 June 1881
[Including calculation by MacGregor of the stipend of the Rev. Dr.
Macdonald, minister of the first charge of Inverness].
SRO, GD 176/1783.

APPENDIX 2

SELECTED WRITINGS

OF THE REV. ALEXANDER MACGREGOR

Selection of writings was carried out with the intention of providing a sample of MacGregor's range of styles and subjects. Thus there are essays, dialogues and a tale in the form of a Biblical style verse; there are writings on emigration, land rights for crofters, nature, folklore, Gaelic education, proverbs and a moral tale. The original spelling has been retained throughout, which accounts for orthographic inconsistencies.

- I Comhairlean do Luchd-imirich 'dh'ionnsuidh America (Clàr 37)
- II An Seangan (Clàr 23)
- III Comhradh Eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair (Clàr 85)
- IV Comhradh Eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair (Clàr 89)
- V Comhradh Eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair (Clàr 121)
- VI Comhradh Eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair (Clàr 179)
- VII Ionraic Mac-Ailein (Clàr 102)

I

Comhairlean do Luchd-imirich 'dh'ionnsuidh America

Is mor am beannachd o Fhreasdal an Tighearna gu bheil fuasgladh an America agus ann an cearnaibh eile de'n t-saoghal, a bhuineas do rioghachd Bhreatainn, air son na muinntir sin feadh Alba, Shasuinn agus Eirinn, aig nach 'eil innleachd air an làithean a chur seachad ach ann am bochduinn, ann an dùthaich am breith. Is beannachd so nach tuigear gu ceart, gus am beachdaichear air cia mar a bhiodh a' chùis, nam biodh gach tìr eile glaiste an aghaidh muinntir a' ta gach bliadhna a' fàgail na rioghachd so, chum solar a dheanamh air son an teaghlaichean, ann an crìochaibh nas tarbhaiche, agus nas freagarraiche anns gach seòl air an son. Cha'n 'eil teagamh nach 'eil saorsa air an dòigh so aig gach rioghachd eile, agus fhad 's nach 'eil cogadh, no aimhreit eatorra, féudaidd an co thàmhachan an rioghachd féin fhàgail, agus dol do thìribh an céin fo chumhachdan agus uachdarain choimheach. Ach c'àit air aghaidh na talmhainn am bheil an rioghachd sin aig am bheil cumhachd agus uachdranachd Bhreatainn? Ged is beag, agus is neoneach (*sic*) an t-Eilein Breatunnach 'an coimeas ri uile thìribh eile a' chruinne-ché, gedheadh nach mòr e 'na riaghladh, 'na ughdarras, agus 'na chumhachd. Tha uile rioghachdan an domhain ag amharc air le farmad, agus tha e mar lòchran soillseach a'm meadhon chuantan an t-saoghail, chum solus agus eòlas a chraobh-sgaoileadh 'am measg uile chinneacha na talmhainn! Is farsuing da rìreadh uachdranachd Bhreatainn. Ma's e America e, nach mòr agus nach lìonmhor na dùthchannan sin ann thairis air a bheil còir aig Breatunn? Nach 'eil Canada Uachdrach agus Iochdrach, *New-Brunswick*, *Nova Scotia*, Eilean Eòin,¹ Ceap Breatoin, *Newfoundland*, agus lìonmhoireachd àitean eile, fo riaghladh agus fo

¹ Prince Edward Island, previously known as St John's Island.

stiùireadh Bhreathuinn? Air an dòigh chéudna tha na h-Innsean an Ear agus an Iar, agus na h-eileanan lionmhor sin leis a bheil cuantan an t-saoghail air am breacadh, fo uachdranachd Bhreathuinn! Tha *New-Zealand*, Tìr *Van Dieman*, agus *Australia* féin nach ionndraineadh fad agus lèud Bhreathuinn as a thaobh, fo'n riaghladh chéudna! Cha luidh a' ghrian gu bràth air na tìrìbh lionmhor agus éugsamhla air feadh an t-saoghail, a ta an diugh fo cheannsal ar n-Ard-Uachdarain Urramach a' Bhan-rìghinn. Thubhairt sinn gur beannachd so o'n Tì uile-ghlòrmhor sin aig a bheil riaghladh na cruithreachd 'na làimh; agus tha e 'na bheannachd da rìreadh dhoibhsan a ta 'ga fhaicinn 'na ghliocas doibh dol le'n teaghlaichibh thar chuanta farsuing a sholar an teachd-an-tìr ann an cearnaibh eile de 'n t-saoghal. Tha iad gun teagamh a' fàgail Bhreathuinn, ach tha iad fathast air an dìonadh agus air an stiùireadh le laghannaibh Bhreathuinn. Ged a dh' fhag iad ann an seadh, an rioghachd, tha iad fathast fo ughdarras na Ban-rìghinn Bhreathuinnich. Tha iad fathast air an gleidheadh tearuinte 'n am pearsaibh agus 'n an cuid, le laghannaibh maithe na rioghachd. Is beannachd o'n Tì a's àirde so - beannachd air nach 'eil meas aig mòran, mar bu chòir dhoibh. Tha e gu tric a' tachairt nach 'eil sinn a' faicinn luach ar sochairean am feadh 's a ta sinn 'gan sealbhachadh. Nach mòr am beannachd an t-uisge a ta sinn ag òl - an t-àile leis a bheil sinn air ar cumail suas, agus an solus a ta 'ghrian a' tilgeadh air feadh an t-saoghail? Ach air dhuinn a bhi 'mealtuinn nam beannachd so gu saor agus gu pailt an còmhnuidh, cha'n 'eil sinn 'ga meas co luachmhor 'sa ta iad. Nam biomaid ann am fàsach gun uisge, gun àile, gun solus, cha bhiomaid aon mhionaid beò! Ceart mar so, cha 'n 'eil sinn a' meas air mhodh cubhaidh ar beannachdan spioradail, do bhrìgh nach robh iad riamh a dhìth oirne. Ach gun ghuth a thoirt air sochairean uile-luachmhor an t-Soisgeil, tha mòran ann nach 'eil a' toirt buidheachais do Dhia air son laghannan na rioghachd leis a bheil beatha agus maoin gach àrd agus ìosal air an dìon. Mar biodh na laghannan so idir ann, cia mar bhiodh a' chùis? Cha'n fhaicte ach réubainn, sgrios, agus bàs anns gach baile agus dùthaich! Faicibh na Frangaich aig a' cheart àm so, a thilg an rìgh agus an reachdan air cùl, agus ciod a dh'éirich dhoibh? Ciod ach sgrios agus aimhreith, mort agus marbhadh gach là - sràidean Phàris agus bhailtean eile air an còmhach le fuil nan amadan a rinn ceannairc an aghaidh nan àrd-chumhachdan! Tha iadsan a ni so a' deanamh ceannairc 'an aghaidh an Rìgh shìorruidh sin a thug an àithne so seachad, "Biodh gach anam umhal do na h-àrd-chumhachdaibh. Oir cha 'n 'eil cumhachd ann ach o Dhia: agus na cumhachdan a ta ann, is ann le Dia a dh' òrduicheadh iad." - Ròm.xiii.1.

Tha laghannan rioghachd Bhreathuinn, annta féin, ceart agus cothromach os ceann laghannan rioghachd eile fo'n ghrein agus air an aobhar sin tha e dlìgheach an t-urram sin a chur orra, air a bheil iad airidh, agus cliù a thoirt do Dhia a ta 'na chaomh-fhreasdal bàigheil ri'r tìr. Chuir sinn mar so an céill feabhas uachdranachd agus laghannan Bhreathuinn, do bhrìgh gu'n sealbhaich am fear-imirich iad ged theid e dh'America, oir ged a dh' fhàgas e an rioghachd cha 'n 'eil e 'call beannachdan a riaghlaidh. Ach a thaobh nithe eile mu'n imirich chudthromaich so, 's e gliocas gach ceannard teaghlaich sealltuinn roimhe 's na dhéigh mu'm fàg e dùthaich a bhreith, dh'fhéuch a bheil no nach 'eil e freagarrach chum sin a dheanamh. Dhàsan tha e 'na ghnothach ro chudthromach agus air an aobhar sin, cothromaicheadh e na ceistean a leanas 'na chridhe féin.- Ciod i a staid far a bheil e, agus am féud dòchas sam bith a bhi aige nach téid an saoghal 'na aghaidh mar a rinn e o chionn ùine air ais? Ciod e

àireamh a chloinne, agus an aois, an neart, an dìchioll, agus an gliocas fa leth? Air an làimh eile, ciod e America, agus ciod an dòchas ri soirbheachadh a ta e 'deacadh, agus a' cumail a mach do'n cheannard-teaghlach so? Tha eòlas trid féin-fhiosrachadh aige air a staid féin 's an rìoghachd so, ach faigheadh e gach eòlas 'na chomas mu America o "Fhear-tathaich nam Beann," agus o gach neach eile nach cuir an céill ach smior na firinn, agus leigeadh e a' chùis r'a thuigse agus r'a bhreithneachadh féin, cia ac' bu chòir dha falbh no fuireach. Cuimhnichheadh e "gur fearr an t-olc eòlach no'n t-olc aineolach," mar 'eil e féin, 's a théaghlach, 's a chuid, freagarrach agus foghainteach air son na h-imirich ro chudthromaich so. Is usa dha gu mòr fuireach far a bheil e na pilltinn air ais, mar 'eil e fein agus a theaghlach freagarrach air son an àite. Ged nach 'eil sinn idir 'ga chomhairleachadh gu fuireach, cha bhrosnaich sinn e gu falbh mar bi sin a réir na barail a's fearr, chum a leas. Tha fhios gu'm bheil mòran air an sàrachadh 's an dùthaich so, agus air tuiteam gu bochduinn, a dheanamh maith an America. Tha fhios nach 'eil dòchas sam bith gu'n ath-leasaich cùisean a bheag sam bith so, no gu'n teid gnothaichean car nas fhearr, fhad 's a tha 'n sluagh co lìonmhor, an dùthaich co bochd, agus co beag foighneachd air cosnaich, gu sònruichte anns a Ghaedhealtachd. Ged a dh 'fhàsadh am Buntàta co maith 's a rinn e riamh, ciod a th' ann ach lòn bochd, neo-àrachail, air 'fheabhas? Ged a tha e blasda, taitneach, 'an déigh sin, tha e mi-tharbhach mar theachd-an-tìr do'n fhear-oibre, 'an coimeas ri lòn a chosnaich an America. 'S i ar barail gur e am Buntàta a thug sgrios air Gaedhealtachd agus eileannaibh na h-Alba. Ceart mar a chaidh e an lìonmhoireachd, rinn an sluagh an ni céudna. Dh'fhàs àireamh an t-sluaigh mòr do bhrìgh gu'n robh iad 'gan earbsadh féin ach beag gu h-iomlan ris a Bhuntàta air son beathachaidh.

Biodh dùil aig balachan ri ceann-iomaire fhaotuinn air son Buntàta a chur ann, agus bha gach cùis ceart. Thogadh e tigh - phòsadh e, agus 'an ceann beagan bhliadhnachan, bhiodh cuignear, no seisar de lobraganaibh beaga, ruisgte mu'n chagailt aige, agus gun nì fo'n ghréin aige chum am beathachadh ach am Buntàta! Ach mo thruaighe! dh'fhalbh am Buntàta, agus tha 'n duine bochd, gearr-sheallach so, agus a shliochd dìblidh, ri h-uchd bàis leis an ocras agus gu h-iomlan 'an crochadh ri seirc agus fiughantas sluaigh eile air son a lòin éiginnich agus ghortaich. Ged is taitneach am Buntàta, is e gun teagamh a thug mu'n cuairt an tomhas mòr bochduinn a ta an diugh air feadh na Gaedhealtachd; ach cha 'n e bu choireach ach an sluagh a shàruich agus a chlaoidh e, le bhi 'gan cumail féin suas ach beag gu h-iomlan leis, agus le bhi gu tric 'ga mhi-bhuileachadh. Feudaidd beannachd, no sochair sam bith, a bhi mar so aira mhi-bhuileachadh. Ach air an làimh eile, ged tha'm Buntàta 'na ni ro bhlasda, agus ion-mhiannuichte, cha'n 'eil neart ann leis féin mar lòn do'n chruadh-chosnach. Cha'n 'eil sùgh no suspainn ann chum smior a chur 's na cnàmhan, no chum fear-oibre sam bith a riarachadh, mar Gadheal no Eirionnach e. Cha'n 'eil sinn a' labhairt so idir mar eas-urram do na Gaedheil (is mòr a ghabhadh-maid), ach mar dhearbh-chinnt' air a' chor bhochd, anns a bheil iad am bicheantas a' tighinn beò, agus mar bhrosnachadh do theaghlachibh làidir chum a' chuid a's fearr a dheanamh air an son féin. 'S an rìoghachd so, tha e mar is tric' a' tachairt gu'm bheil duine bochd air a shàrachadh ann an tomhas beag no mòr a réir àireamh na cloinne aige. Ma tha'n teaghlach tròm, lìonmhor, tha iad a'm bicheantas bochd a réir sin, gu sònruichte gus am fàs iad suas. Anns a' Ghaedhealtachd cha 'n 'eil cosnadh no duais ri'm faotuinn,

mar teid an luchd-oibre air falbh ceudan mìle 'gan iarraidh, agus cha dean ach cosnaich chalma idir an gnothach, gu dol air an dòigh so fad as. Mar so, tha na ceannarda-teaghlaich agus am mic a's sine a' toirt an iasgaich sgadain orra ré na h-ùine a mhaireas e, an sin bheir iad na slighean-iarruinn orra, agus bu ro mhaith leò nam biodh na h-oibrean so an còmhnuidh fosgailte dhoibh. Ré na h-ùine a ta iad air falbh, air an dòigh so, tha na mnathan agus a' chlann air am fàgail a'm bochduinn aig a' bhaile, gun a bheag a chum buannachd aca r'a dheanamh. Féumaidh so uile tachairt, air neo cha bhi sgillinn aca do'n Bhàili, no chum min a cheannach d'an teaghlaichibh troma. Uime sin, tha mar is trice bochduinn an teaghlaich a réir àireimh an teaghlaich. Ach an America tha atharrachadh mòr air a' chùis, do bhrìgh an sin gur e saibhreas an teaghlaich lionmhoireachd a bhuill. Cha 'n eagal an America do'n fhear aig am bheil teaghlach làidir, glic, agus deanadach, ged nach biodh sgillinn de 'n t-saoghal aige a' dol ann. Is fearr a chuid mac agus nighean dha an sin, na suim gun choimeas de dh'airgiod, as an eugmhais. Gheibh gach beag agus mòr cosnadh r'a dheanamh, gun dol fad' 'ga iarraidh, agus tha 'bhuannachd uile do'n teaghlach féin. Tha fear-an-tighe an sin, mar bu chòir dha bhi, 'na cheannard, 'na uachdaran, agus 'na thighearna air a chuid féin. Faigheadh e aon uair greim air fearann saor, ni a dh'fhaodas teaghlach làidir dìchiollach sam bith a dheanamh ann an ùine ghoirid, agus an sin bithidh toradh a shaoithreach gu h-iomlan aige féin. Ge b'e ciod ris an cuir an neach a's lugha 's an tigh a làmh, tha sin a chum maith an teaghlaich. Ach mar a dh'ainmicheadh cheana, is còir do'n cheannard-teaghlaich beachd-smuaineachadh mu'n caruich e as an àite 's an d'rugadh e, am bheil no nach 'eil e féin agus a chuideachd iomchuidh air son America. Ma tha a chuid cloinne lìonmhor, lag, agus neo-chomasach air cosnadh a dheanamh, agus mar 'eil airgiod maith mu'n seach aige, chum tuarsadal a dheanamh suas do luchd-oibre, cha deanadh e ach a cheann a chur fo'n uisge gu buileach, agus amhach a chàradh fo chuing as nach fhaigheadh e, feudaidh e bhi a chaidh fuasgladh le dol air imirich do America. Is fearr a bhi ann am bochduinn am measg a chàirdean agus a luchd-eòlais gus am fàs a chlann suas, ma chaomhnar e gu sin fhaicinn, na e féin a thilgeadh lòm, ruisgte, falaamh, lag-chuiseach am measg nan aineolach, ann an dùthaich chéin agus choimhich. Tha 'n fhirinn cheudna a' co'-sheasamh a thaobh gach cearn' eile de'n t-saoghal co maith agus a thaobh America. Cha soirbh an ni do dhuine bochd le teaghlach tròm, a bhi suas an àite 's am bith; ach ma chuirear an imirich air 'am meadhon a bhochdainn, no ma thogas e air d'a dheòin féin, gu America no àite sam bith eile, gun a bhi uidheamaichte no iomchuidh air a shon, feudaidh e tachairt nach teid e os a cheann gu bràth. Far nach dean ni sam bith ach an dubh-chosnadh an gnothach, mar ann an coilltibh America, cha soirbh dhàsan a bhi suas ann, aig nach 'eil buidheann 'na fhàrdaich féin chum an cosnadh sin a dheanamh. Mar leag e 'inntinn agus a thoil ri obair chruaidh agus dhìchiollaich, cha'n éirich a' chùis leis, agus cha tig rath féin no air a theaghlach.

Beachdaicheadh neach sam bith air a' chunntas a ta e 'faotuinn air Eilean Eòin, Ceap Breatain, *Nova Scotia* agus *New Brunswick*, agus chì e nach beag an t-saothair a dh'fhéumas e 'dheanamh. Dh' aindeoin co tarbhach agus beartach 's gu'm feud am fearann a bhi, cha'n fhaigh an duine bochd e ach ann an staid nàduir; agus cha'n ann gun fhallas a ghruaidh a ni e féum deth. Ach air an làmh eile, ma tha duine ann aig a bheil na h-urrad ghilleann agus nigheananan air fàs suas gu aois cosnaidh, thigeadh e

air aghaidh an America ged a bhiodh e glé bhoichd agus lòn a' dol ann. Is aithne dhuinn duine a bha 's an staid so, a rinn dìchioll, le 'chuid de'n t-saoghal a reiceadh, air an airgiod-aisig iocadh, agus mar sin air faotuinn gu tearuinte a null.

Abair gur Ailean Bàn a b'ainm dhà. Chaidh Ailean boichd mu'n ghnòthach gu dòigheil, tuigseach; ged a bha e anns gach nì mu'n chùis a' cogadh 'an aghaidh toil' a mhnà, a bha làn-thoilichte mu dheireadh air an imirich a dheanamh, mar b'e aon nì, agus b'e sin oillt agus eagal gun choimeas roimh 'n chuan mhòr. Dh' éisd, agus réusanaich Ailean, gus mu dheireadh an d'fhuair e air éigin co-aontachadh bean-an-tighe.

Air là àraidh sheòl an long, agus Ailean 's a chuideachd, agus iomadh teaghlach eile 'na broinn: ach féudaich e bhì nach robh aon neach air bòrd a bha co tur falamh ri Ailean. Cha robh punnd Sasunnach de'n t-saoghal aige an uair a thog an long na siùil ach bha e suilbhir, toilichte, agus dòchasach, do bhrìgh nach robh sgillinn ruadh aig duine beò air. An ceann ceithir-là-fichead rainig an soitheach thall; agus cha robh neach 'sa' chuideachd uile ris am b'fhearr an do chòrd an cuan-thuras, na ri mnaoi ghealtaich Ailein.

Chaidh e air tìr, agus fhuair e mach tigh caraid, a thug iomadh gealladh dha ann an litrichibh air càirdeas, agus cuideachadh, nan ruigeadh se e. Thug e féin agus a theaghlach àite-còmhnuidh a' charaid sin orra, a thug aoidheachd dhoibh gun teagamh a réir a gheallaidh. Ach ged bu chòir, caoimhneil an caraid e, gidheadh, cha b' fhada gus an d'fhuair Ailean a mach nach robh àit' ann cosmhuil ris an dachaidh air a suarraichead. Ach chum an sgéul a dheanamh goirid, chaidh Ailean an cean na seachduinn maille r'a charaid, a dh'amharc, an toiseach air ceud acair fhearainn, agus a ris, air an fhear aig an robh ùghdarras chum am fearann sin a reic. Chòrdadh air a shon, agus gheall Ailean sgillinn Shasunnach 's a' bhliadhna mar mhàl air gach acair dh'e, gus am faigheadh e comas air earrann 'an deigh earrainn dh'e a cheannach a mach 'sa mach dha féin. Air do na cùisibh so a bhì air an socrachadh, bheachdaich Ailean còir nì b'fhearr air a chuid fùinn - chuairtich se e air gach taobh, agus smuainich e 'na chridhe féin, mo thruaighe! nach bu shoirbh an gnothach teachd-an-tìr an teaghlach a thoirt as. Bha na craobhan a' cur eagal air, gun fhios aige fo'n ghréin cia mar a chuireadh e as doibh. De'n cheud acair cha robh fiù lèud na cainb-fhasgaidh réidh. Bha coille dhlùth, dhosrach, gharbh, 'gan còmhdachadh gu léir, agus ann an àitibh bu ghann a chiteadh solus na gréine troimh 'n bharrach thiugh! Ach cha deanadh dàil an gnothach. Dh'fhéumadh tigh a bhì air a chur r'a chéile mar fhasgadh do'n teaghlach, agus dh' fhéumadh craobhan a bhì air an leagadh, air an gearradh, agus air an cuimireachadh air a shon.

Chaidh Ailean, maille ri caraid no dithis, a mach là de na làithean le tuadh an làimh gach fir. Cha robh an tuadh thiugh, gheinneach, fhad-chasach, a chuireadh ann an làimh Ailein idir, idir, a' còrdadh ris, agus bha aithreachas gu leòir air nach tug e leis an tuadh mhòr, thaicéil, a reiceadh air neo-nì mu'n d'fhàg e'n t-Eilean Sgiathanach. Thòisich e ri leagadh nan craobh agus chuir e ri gearradh gu cruaidh, gus an robh 'fhallas 'ga dhalladh ach mo thruaighe! a nàire 's a mhasladh 'na bheachd féin air dha fhaicinn an déigh cairteal latha chur seachad gu'n do leag balachan beag, cuig-bliadhna déug a dh'aois, mac a charaid dìreach a dhà urrad ris féin! Cha robh e idir toilichte an uair a chunnaic e so; ach thugadh misneach dha, agus chuireadh 'an céill da gu'n "teid cleachd' thar neart" 's an obair sin. Mu dheireadh, le cuideachadh a

chàirdean, thogadh an tigh, leis na craobhan air an leagail air a chéile - chaidh a theaghlach da ionnsaidh agus thug a chuid mac an cosnadh orra ré beagan sheachduinnean, chum airgiod a dheanamh gu lòn a cheannach do'n chuideachd. Ann an ùine ghoirid, dh'fhàs Ailean ni b'ealanta air leagadh nan craobh, agus le dichìoll a chuid mac, réiticheadh urrad de'n fhearann mu'n tainig an t-earrach 'sa thug cothrom dha air bàrr cuimseach a chur 's an talamh. Mu'n do ruith cuig bliadhna déug, bha am fearann gu léir air a réiteachadh, agus air a chuairteachadh le callaidean dìongalta - bun nan craobh air an spìonadh as an talamh - tighean ùra agus seasgarra air an togail, agus deadh stoc cruidh, 'us chaorach, 'us mhuc aige air an fhearann. A thuille air so, ghabh mic an tuathanaich dhìchiollaich so gach fearann a bha r'a reic ceithir thimchioll an fhearainn aige féin - thig iad tighean - phòs iad; agus air an là 'n diugh, cha 'n e mhàin gu bheil Ailean còir féin 'na dhuine làidir, cothromach, ach tha a mhic dìreach mar bu mhaith leis iad a bhi. Air an taobh a stigh do mhìle astair, tha theaghlach féin agus ceithir teaghlaichean a shìochd air an suidheachadh agus gun fhios sam bith aca air a' ghanndar leis am biodh iad a réir coslais air an claidh mar fagadh iad riamh an tìr dhùthchais.

Thug sinn eachdraidh an teaghlaich so, a mhàin mar eisimpleir am measg mhòran eile a dh'fhéudamaid ainmeachadh, chum beachd cinnteach agus firinneach a thoirt d'ar luchd-dùthcha, air na cùisibh ris am féud dùil a bhi aig an leithidean eile, ma theid iad air imirich thar chuantan farsuing chum an ionaid chéudna. Do bhrìgh gur gnothach cudthromach imirich mar so a dheanamh, cha 'n 'eil aig a mhuinntir sin, aig am bheil dùil ris ach beachd ceart a ghabhail de'n ghnòthach, agus gun ni air bith a dheanamh gu bras, no gu mì-chùramach. Air dhoibh a' chùis a rannsachadh chum na cuid a's faide, agus an inntinn féin a riarachadh, guidheadh iad Airsan aig am bheil gach uile chumhachd air nèamh agus air talamh, agus aig a bheil a chaomh-fhreasdail os ceann oibre féin gu léir chum an stiùireadh agus am beannachadh, agus chum na comhairle a's fearr, a thaobh nithe aimsireil agus spioradail a stéidheachadh nan cridhe.

SGIATHANACH

II

An Seangan

Tha oibre an Tighearna gu léir a' fòillseachadh a ghliocais, a chumhachd, agus a mhaitheis neo-chrìochnuichte. Mar is mò a bheachdaicheas sinne air na h-oibribh sin, agus mar is cùramaich' a bheir sinn fa'near na crìochan sònraichte a ta air an co'-lìonadh leo, chi sinn nì's soilleire ar suaraichead, agus ar neo-iòmlanachd fein. Cha'n ann gu'n aobhar a thubhairt Daibhidh, 'nàm da 'bhi beachd-smuaineachadh air òirdheirceas àinm' Jehobhaidh a shocraich a ghlòir os ceann nan neàmh, "'N uair a dh' amhairceas mi air do neamhaibh, obair do mheùr; air a' ghealaich, agus air na reùltaibh, a shuidhich thu; cò e an duine gu'm biodh tusa cùimhneachail air, agus mac an duine gu'm fiosraicheadh tu e?" - Tha e 'na nì araon taitneach agus iomchuidh do'n duine, a bhi 'suidheachadh inntinn fein air uil' oibribh Dhé, do bhrìgh gu'm bheil iad sin a' nochdadh mòrachd agus maitheis an Tì uile-ghlòrmhoir sin, trid am bheil na h-uile nìthe a' co'-sheasamh! Bha na fàidhean, agus na h-abstoil, agus na naoimh anns gach linn do'n t-saoghal, a' beachdachadh le cùram air oibribh an Tighearna, agus 'ga mholadh air son a bhearta iongantach do chloinn nan daoine. Nochd ar Slanuighear beannuichte fein maitheas Dé, le bhith 'toirt fa'near a chùraim a bha e' gabhail do eunlaith an athair; - "Amhaircibha," ars' esan "air eunlaith an athair: oir cha chuir iad siòl, agus cha bhuain iad, agus cha chruinnich iad na saibhlibh; gidheadh, a ta bhur n-Athair neamhaidh-sa 'gam beathachadh." - Nochd e ann an àit eile gu'm bheil Dia 'gabhail cùraim eadhon do luibhibh na macharach, agus air an aobhar sin, gu'm bu chòir do dhaoineibh an dòchas a chur anns an Tighearna.- "Thugaibh fa'near na lilighean, cionnus a ta iad a' fàs: cha'n 'eil iad a' saothreachadh, no a' sniomh; gidheadh a ta mi ag ràdh ribh, nach robh Solamh fein 'na ghlòir uile air a sgeudachadh mar aon diubh so." Cha'n e mhàin gu'm bheil maise agus mòrachd oibre Dhé, a' spàrradh irioslachd air ar n-inntinn, ach tha Dia fein 'faicinn iomchuidh ar teagasg o eiseimpleir chréatairean a ta annta fein suarach. Chruthaicheadh an duine le barrachd tuigse na thugadh do bheathaichibh na macharach, ach thruailleadh an inntinn aige co mòr leis an tuiteam, 's gu'm féud na creatairean a's suaraiche a theagasg! Air an aobhar sin, tha Dia 'gar cur a dh' fhoghlum ar dleas'nais dh' iònnsuidh eunlaith nan spéur, agus bheathaichean na machrach! Am bheil sinn mi-thaingeil? Ma tha - rachamaid chum an daimh agus an asail, oir tha Dia ag ràdh, "Is aithne do'n damh a shealbhadair, agus do'n asail prasach a mhaighstir; ach cha'n aithne do Israel; cha'n eil mo shluagh-sa a' toirt fa-near." (Is. i. 3) A rìs, am bheil sinn mi-chùramach ma thimchioll oibre freasdail Dé, agus a' dichuimhneachadh nan amanna a's freagarraiche chum ar dleas'nais a cho'-lìonadh? Ma tha - rachamaid dh' iònnsuidh eunlaith nan spéur; oir tha Dia ag ràdh, "Is aithne do'n chorra-bhàin anns an athar a h-àm fein, agus is aithne do'n choluman, agus do'n chorra-mhonaidh, agus do'n gholan-ghaoithe àm an teachd: ach cha'n aithne dom' shluagh-sa breitheanas an Tighearna." (Jer. vii. 7.)

A rìs; am bheil sinn làn cùraim agus iomaguin, agus a' suidheachadh ar cridhe gu tur air cìod a dh' itheas sinn, cìod a dh' òlas sinn, agus cìod a chuireas sinn umainn? Ma tha - fòghlumaid gliocas o'n fhìtheach; oir tha Crìosd ag ràdh, "Thugaibh fa'near na fithich, oir cha'n 'eil iadsan a' cur no 'buain; cha'n 'eil aca tigh-tasgaidh no sabhal; agus a ta Dia 'gam beathachadh; cia mòr is fearr sibhse na an

eunlaith?" (Luc. xii. 24.) A rìs; am bheil sinn leasg, lunnach, agus dìomhanach? Ma tha - tha Dia le beùl an duine ghlice 'gar cur dh' ionnsuidh an t-seangain; "Imich a chum an t-seangain, a leisgein; thoir fa'near a shlighean, agus bi glic; aig nach 'eil fear-seòlaidh, fear-amhairc, no riàghlair, a dh' ulluicheas a bhiadh 'san t-sàmhradh, agus a chruinneachas a theachd-an-tìr 'san fhogharadh." (Gnàth. vi. 6-8.)

Gu cinnteach is beag an creùtair an seangan, ach is glic, treùn, agus deanadach e.- Is mìorbhuileach a ta gnàthanna agus cleachdanna a' chréutair bhig so a' foillseachadh cùraim an Tighearna do na créutairibh a's lugha, agus a's suàraichde, co math agus do na bithibh cruthaichte a's mò, agus a's urramaiche a ta idir ann!

Thug an *Cuairtear* a cheana cùntas d'a luchd-leùghaidh, air na h-uiread do na h-oibribh a's òirdheirce 'sa chruitheachd. Labhair e mu'n ghréin, mu'n ghealaich, agus mu chruinn-mheallaibh sòillseach nan spéur, agus rinn e a dhìchioll air cumhachd agus maitheas neo-chrìochnuichte Dhé, mar a ta iad air am foillseachadh anns na cuspairibh àluinn sin, a sparradh air ìntinn nan Gaidheal. Ach tha'n cumhachd agus am maitheas ceúdna, air am foillseachadh ceart co soilleir ann an nithibh beaga na cruitheachd, is a ta iad anns na nithibh mòra.- Tha iad air am foillseachadh eadhon anns an t-seangan, ged is beag, suàrach, agus faoin an creùtair e, ann an sùilibh dhaoine.

Tha na h-uile eòlach air an t-seangan, ach feúdaidh e bhi gur ainneamh iad aig am bheil fios air innleachdaibh agus cleachdannaibh a' chréutair dhìchiollaich so. - Bheir sinn an so gu h-aithghearr fa'near iad, agus chì sinn an sin ni's soilleire an t-aobhar a bha aig Solamh gu ràdh "Imich a chum an t-seangain, a leisgein."

Tha iomadh gnè ann do na seanganaibh, a réir an dath agus an cleachdanna.- Tha gnè ann a ta 'nan sàoraibh, agus gnè eile 'nan clacharaibh.- Goirear riu, mar a's trice, an seangan-donn, an seangan-geal, an seangan-buidhe, agus mar sin sìos.- Tha iad a' teachd beò, mar a's trice, 'nam bùidhnibh, agus 'nan comunnaibh cosmhuil ris na seilleanaibh.- Anns gach comunn tha banrighinn, d'am bheil càch uile a' toirt mòr-ùmhlaich.- A thuilleadh air so, tha 'n comunn air a dheanamh suas do na seanganaibh fìrionn, agus boirionn, agus do luchd-oibre, agus do shaighdairibh nach 'eil aon chuid fìrionn no boirionn! 'S iad an luchd-oibre a's liònmhoire 'sa chomunn uile, iadsan aig am bheil mar dhréuchd a bhi 'togail agus a' cumail suas an tighean agus an seòmraichean,- a bhi rànsachadh air son teachd-an-tìr,- agus a bhi 'gabhail cùraim do 'n òigridh. Cha dean na saighdairean obair sam bith ach saighdaireachd; agus mar biodh gu'm bheil càch 'gan cumail suas, agus 'gam beathachadh, mar dhuais air son an tréubhantais ann an cogadh, rachadh iad a dhìth. Tha dà lànn, cosmhuil ri da mhinidh chaol, bhiorach, a' teachd a mach a' ceann nan saighdair so, leis an lot agus am marbh iad an nàimhdean! Tha iad a ghnàth deas gu cogadh ann an àm cunnairt,- gu dol a mach air tòir an nàimhdean, - agus gu seasamh 'nan luchd-freiceadain aig dorsaibh an tighean fein. Tha sùil aig gach sgiobadh air an obair fein, agus cha chuir a h-aon bacadh no grabadh ann an rathad an aoin eile. Is mìorbhuileach mar a ta fios aca fa leth; air an dleas' nas fein, agus mar a ni iad e, gu dìchiollach agus gu toileach. Is iongantach an tlachd a ta aig a' chomunn uile 'n'am banrighinn fein. Ge b'e àit anns am bi i, tha aoibhneas mòr air a nochdadh an sin, leò-san uile mu'n cuairt di. Leúmaidh iad suas - éiridh iad air an cosaibh-deiridh,- ruithidh iad mu'n cuairt di,- agus ni iad strìth cò a's mò a nochdas do chàirdeas agus do dhìllseachd dhi!

Tha na seanganan, mar as trice, a' togail an tighean am measg chòilltean agus fhraoich. Nì gach buidheann àite-comhnuidh dhoibh fein, far am faic iad freagarrach e; agus togaidh iad e 'na thòrr àrd, cruinn, agus corrach, le smùirgeanaibh do gach gnè, agus le bioranaibh beaga a ghiùlaineas iad 'nam beúl, no air an druim, astar fada chum an àite! Nì cuid eile an tighean gu h-àrd ann an craobhaibh; agus cuid eile fo' chlochaibh, agus anns an talamh. Tha na tighean aig na bùidhnibh mòra, air an cur a mach 'nan seòmraichibh a ta 'nan sreathaibh os ceann a' cheile, agus air an dealachadh le slighibh àimhleathan, agus le ballachaibh tarsuing!

Tha na seanganan ag oibreachadh a là agus a dh' oidhche, agus a réir coslais, cha'n 'eil feúm aca air tàmh no codal! Tha iad a' teachd beò air cuileagaibh, agus air biasdagaibh beaga do gach gnè, air am faigh iad gréim; agus cha dean iad tàir air lòn sam bith a dh' ithear le créutairibh co mòr ri luch, agus ithidh iad suas iad. Os ceann gach uile nì eile, tha iad cùramach chum solar a dheanamh air son a' gheamhraidh; agus gu cinnteach, mar a thubhairt Agur, "Tha na seangain 'nan sluagh nach 'eil laidir; gidheadh, ulluichidh iad am biadh 'san t-samhradh." (Gnàth. xxx. 25)

Is iongantach an dichìoll leis an giùlain iad lòn chum an tighean, agus is mòr na h-eallaichean a bheir iad leò còmhladh! Cha'n fhan iad aon mhionaid diomhanach, agus cha dhìchuimhnich aon sam bith dhiubh, a dhleas' nas fein a cho'-lionadh. Ma fhliuchar an lòn aca le h-uisge 'nan ionadaibh-tasgaidh, bheir iad gu cùramach a mach e, chum a thiomachadh an uair a thig teas na gréine! Tha iad a' gabhail mòr-chùrain d'an oigridh, le bhi 'gan seòladh agus 'gan teagasg gu bhi deanadach, agus dichìollach. Is iongantach an tùr agus an gliocas a nochdas iad 'nan uile ghnìomharaibh, ged nach 'eil fear-seòlaidh sam bith thairis orra, no fear-amhairc agus riaghlair chum an stiùireadh. Agus cha'n e mhàin sin, ach cogaidh iad 'nan àrmaitibh riaghailteach an aghaidh an nàimhdean, agus cuiridh iad as d'a chéile air gach taobh le mòr ghaisge agus chrùadal. Cha'n fhaicear faitcheas no eagal air taobh seach taobh. Le mòr thrèùbhantas, bheir aon chomunn ionnsuidh air comunn eile; agus cha'n 'eil bàigh no trocair ann!

Cha nochd iadsan leis an téid an là, truas no h-ìochd sam bith d'an taobh-san air an tugadh buaidh; ach bheir iad leo an teachd-an-tìr, agus an òigridh dh' ionnsuidh an tighean fein; agus tuilleadh an déigh sin nì iad trailleadh da'm prìosanaibh uile! 'N aon fhocal, tha gnathanna a' chréutair bhig so, co éugsamhla agus co iongantach annta fein, is nach soirbh an nì an toirt gu léir fa' near. Làbhradh, gidheadh, nì's leòir chum aobhar na comhairle aig Solamh do'n leisgean, fhaicinn gu soilleir. Is biasdag an seangan a ta comharraichte air son dichill agus saothreach, agus aig am bheil fuath do leisge agus do dhìomhanas. Oibrichidh e le riaghailt agus lathailt eagnuidh, a nì cinnteach e gu'n téid a' chùis leis. Glacaidh e gach cothrom chum gach nì a dheanamh 'na àm fein, agus cha dichuimhnich e solar a dheanamh 'na àm fein, agus cha dichuimhnich e solar a dheanamh fa chomhair an ama ri teachd. "Ulluichidh e a bhiadh 'san t-samhradh, agus cruinnichidh e a theachd-an-tìr 'san fhogharadh." Gu cinnteach tha so foillseachadh gliocais an Dé Uile-chumhachdaich sin; "A tha deanamh nithe mòra, agus do-rannsachaidh; nithe iongantach gu'n àireamh." Uime so,

"Eirich a lundaire gu grad,
'S thoir ort an seangan beag gu'n stad;
Oir ged nach d' fhuair e riamh fear-iùil;

SGIATHANACH

224

III

Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair

MUR.- A dhiulanaich mo ghraidh, ciod ris am bheil thu mar so, le d' chaibe mor, le d' gheimhleig fhada , agus le d' phiocaid gheur? Ann an ainm an aigh, ciod is obair duit, agus ciod is ciall do 'n toll mhor, fharsuing a tha thu a' cladhach air a' chomhnard so?

COIN.- Gleidh mise! Am bheil mo shuilean a' cur an ceill na firinn, no am bheil iad ga m' mhealladh le faoin-sgailibh luaineach, no le taibhs'-shealladh air mo charaid runach? Is tusa th' ann, fhir mo ghaoil, is tu a th' ann gun teagamh. Ochan! ochan! tha sòlas an diugh mar chaomh-sholus na greine a' boisgeadh anns gach ionad agus oisinn mu 'n cuairt, do bhrìgh gu 'n do nochd thu thu fein gun fhios gun aire, gun duil gun dochas riut. Is mairig a their nach 'eil brìgh ann am brùadar. Chunnaic mi 'n am chadal an raor thu, agus thubhairt mi 's a' mhaduinn ri Seonaid "Cha 'n fhada gus am faic sinn Murachadh Ban," - agus nach b'fhior e! Ochan, a Rìgh!

Is i do bheatha do 'n Ghoirtean-Fraoich,

'S aighearach, aobhach an diugh mi;

A Mhurachaidh, thig, 's dean suidh' ri m' thaobh,

Dh' fhag d' fhaotainn balbh gun ghuth mi.

Tha Seonaid 'dannsadh air an raoin,

Tha 'n Goirtean-Fraoich gu cridheil;

Gach beag a's mor a' glaothaich maraon-

"Tha Murachadh Bàn air tighinn!"

MUR.- B' e 'n t-ioghnadh e, a Choinnich, b' e 'n t-ioghnadh caraid fhaicinn a chunncas leat gu tric roimhe, a chunncas leat o cheann ghoirid, agus a chithear leat fathast gu tric ma bhios cothrom agus comas nan cas aig seann Mhurachadh Bàn. Ach tha moran agam r'a fhoighneachd mu 'n ghne oibre a th'agad os laimh an sin; mu 'n bhardachd a rinn thu a dh-altachadh mo bheatha aon uair eile do 'n Ghoirtean-Fraoich, agus mu chor Seonaid a tha 'dannsadh air na raontibh, ma 's fìor a deagh chompanach. Tha eagal orm, gidheadh, nach 'eil anns an dannsadh sin ach aon de na dealbhaibh luaineach a shuidhich na Ceolraidhean anns an inntinn innleachdaich aig Coinneach Ciobair. Ach biodh sin mar a' fheudas, cha d' innis thu riamh dhomh gu 'n robh grìde na bardachd 's a' chlaigeann chruaidh sin agad, agus cha do smuainich mi riamh gu'n robh thu air do dheachdadh le spiorad nan ceolraidh, gus an cual mi na rannan ud a rinn thu air ball, an uair a thainig mi ort gun fhios gun air dhuit. Tha deagh fhios agam gu 'm bheil thu taghta air na h-oranaibh ged nach robh comas agam aig am sam bith do chluinntinn. Ach cluinnidh mi an deigh so caileigin de 'n rannaireachd air am bheil thu gun teagamh co ro ghleusda. Aig an am so, gidheadh cha 'n 'eil uin' agam r' a bhuileachadh air na nithibh sin, dh'aindeoin co taitneach 's a bhitheadh iad.

COIN.- Nach minic a chual thu, a' Mhurachaidh, "gur luaithe deoch na sgeul!" Air do 'n chuis a bhi mar sin, fagam an toll mosach, salach so, far am bheil mi, mar a tha thu 'faicinn, co bog, fluich, tartmhor, sgith, agus rachamaid a choimhead air Seonaid, air am bheil fadal gu leoir, gu d' fhaicinn, agus feuchaidh sinn ciod a dh' fheudas a bhi s' an t-searraig-dhuibh, oir tha e cinnteach gu 'm bheil feum nach beag agad-sa air boinne 's air bonnach an deigh do thurais; agus cha mhiste mi fein an t-suil a fhliuchadh an deigh m' aornagain agus mo luidridh 's an t-sloc dhuibh ud. Tiugainn,

ma ta, thugamaid an tigh oirnn, oir co cinnteach ri airgiod bhaistidh, tha Seonaid air call a foighidinn.

MUR.- "Co cinnteach ris an airgiod bhaistidh," an e a thubhairt thu, a' Choinnich choir. Bha 'n la sin ann, ach am measg nithe eile, dh' fhalbh e. Cha 'n 'eil guth an diugh air airgiod baistidh, ach 'n a aite bheirear seachad mir mor paipeir co leathann ri dorus a' mhuilinn, air am bheil gach ni mu'n leanaban air a chur sios; ach is tu fein a's eolaiche air so a chleachd e. Air mo shon-sa dheth, tha 'n la sin seachad, ach cha d' eirich sin duit-sa, fhir mo ghraidh. Ciod, gidheadh, is ciall do'n t-sloc uamhasach sin anns am bheil thu a' cladhach?

COIN.- Is comadh leam sin, a' Mhurachaidh, agus cha 'n ann a thoirt droch fhreagairt ortsa; ach cha chuireadh e mor-dhuilichinn orm, ged dheanadh e leabadh re seachdain do'n fhear a's coireach ri bhi ga 'dheanamh.

MUR.- Seadh, ach co e am fear sin?

COIN.- Co, ach Sir Seumas an aigh! So mar a bha 'n gnothuch. Bhruadair e air oidhch' araidh gu 'n robh am fearann aige lan guail, agus nach robh an gual ach beagan shlat sios o bharr na talmhainn, anns a' cheart aite far am bheil mi a' cladhach. Uime sin, dh' orduich e dhomhsa cumadh an tuill a ghearradh a mach, agus a bhi 'criomadh ris mar a dh' fheudas mi, gus an cuir e comunn laidir ga 'oibreachadh air an ath sheachdain. Theid e sios, tha e 'g radh, gu doimhneachd thri no ceithir fichead aitheamh; ach ged a rachadh e sios gus an tig e a mach air taobh eile pheileir na talmhainn, cha 'n fhaigh e smad guail.

MUR.- Cha chual mi a leithid riamh! An e so aobhar a' bhurachaidh a tha thu a' deanamh, a charaid? Tha 'n obair mor, ach cha 'n 'eil i taitneach, agus gu cinnteach, mar a thubhairt thu, cha bhi i tarbhach.

COIN.- A reir mo bheachdsa, a Mhurachaidh, tha 'n gnothuch mar so - cha 'n 'eil teagamh agam ann - agus 's e sin, gu 'm bheil bruilleann iongantach ann an eanchainn Shir Seumas riamh o 'n dhealaich e ris an tuath mhor aige, agus o'n ghabh e na fearanna 'n a laimh fein. Gach la o'n am sin, bha e cosmhuil ris a' bhuideal a bha cas-ruidhleadh leis an leathad, gun arcan ann, agus a bha sìor chur nan car dheth, ach cha robh car ach car gu call. Mar sin, dh' eirich do Shir Seumas. Bho am an dealachaidh so, cha robh tlachd no rath air ni sam bith a bhuineadh dha. Ghabh e searbh aithreachas, agus cha 'n aidich se e. Dh' fhas e co frionsach, crosda, greannach 'n a nadur ri cearc-Fhrangach, agus cha robh e 'faotuinn fois 'n a inntinn fein a la no dh-oidhche. Cha do fhreagair an spreidh Eireannach 's an tir so idir. Chaidh na h-uiread de na h-eich a dhith air, agus iadsan nach deachaidh, dh'fhas iad co caol, cruaidh ri bulas na poite. Chaill an crodh na laoigh, shearg na caoraich as leis a' ghalar-greidh, agus cha 'n 'eil ach mi-shealbh air gach ni o 'n la dheistinneach sin air an d'thainig eadar e fein agus na tuathanaich cheanalta a bha 'g àiteachadh an fhuinn aige. Cha sugradh mi-ghean agus droch-ghuidhe an duine bhoichd. Cha 'n 'eil teagamh nach iomadh mallachd a ghuidheadh dha leo-san a chuireadh air imirich, gun fhios aca c' ait an rachadh iad. Agus is iad na feidh, na gearain, agus na cearcan-fraoich bu choireach ri sin. Bu cho maith, tha mi an duil, le Sir Seumas urchur a losgadh air a chuid cloinne agus a losgadh le tuathanach air na h-eoin-ruadha, no air na coilich-dhubha, a bhiodh a' milleadh nan adag, agus a' saltairt air an arbhar fo 'n cosaibh. Bu

chruaidh a bhi ga 'm faicinn mar sin a' milleadh toradh na talmhainn, agus gun chridhe bhi aig neach ite a chur asda le fudar agus luaidh, no le innleachd sam bith eile. Cha 'n 'eil mi ga 'mheas 'n a pheacadh idir, a Mhurachaidh, urchair a ghabhail ma gheibhear i gun fhios; agus cha ruig duine a leas a bhi fo rugha-gruaidhe ged a bheireadh e crann á coille, bradan à sruth, no fiadh à fireach. Ach tha 'n t-am air teachd chum gu 'm biodh na nithe sin air an socrachadh le lagh na rioghachd. Tha uachdarana-fearainn mar dhaoine air bhainidh a thaobh na seilg. Tha iad caoin-shuarach, coma, ciod an diomhail a ni na creutairean sin air pòr an tuathanaich, agus a dh-aindeoin na ni iad de chall, cha mhaithear aon sgillin ruadh air a shon, air an la anns an togair na màil.

MUR.- Chual mi gach lide a labhair thu, a' Choinnich. Tha mi ag aontachadh leis gach ni a chuir thu an ceill, agus tha duilichinn orm gu 'm bheil Sir Seumas co fada, fada 'n a sholus fein, agus co dian an aghaidh soirbheachadh nan daoine ceanalta a rugadh agus a dh' araicheadh air an fhearann aige. An aite sin, bu choir uail a bhi air, air son muinntir co treun, cliuiteach, gaisgeach a bhi 'n a fhochair, agus ann an seadh a bhi leis fein. Is mor am milleadh agus am mi-shuaimhneas a tha 'n sealg sin a' deanamh. Tha seann oran ag radh:-

"Is aoibhneach an obair an t-seilg,

Is mairg nach faigh comas air."

Ach cha meas na tuathanaich bhochda 'n a ni ro aoibhneach e, a bhi faicinn nan raon aca air am milleadh leis, an deigh gach cosdais a tha 'n an lorg. Cha 'n 'eil e furas do Shir Seumas seasamh an aghaidh nan nithe sin, oir tha 'n calldach mor agus dorranach, - agus cha lughaid e idir nach ruig a leas duil a bhi aige ri co'-fhulangas sam bith fhaotainn uatha-san a ta mu 'n cuairt da. Their iad; - "Tha chead aige - thoill e gu leir e - is maith an airidh gu 'm faigheadh e a cheannsachadh, oir cha d' rinn e baigh ri ard no ri iosal air an oighreachd aige. Cha sugradh gaoir an duine bhochd."

COIN.- Is mise tha sgith dhe bhi cluinntinn seanachais de 'n ghne sin gach la tha mi 'g eirigh agus a' gluasad, agus o bheul gach neach a dh' fhosgaileas am bilean mu 'n chuis. Tha eagal mor orm gu 'm bheil na nithe sin uile a' cur bruailean ann an ceann an ridire oir tha e 'g orduchadh gu 'm biodh sud agus so air a dheanamh gun fhios idir c'arson. Nach amaideach an obair so fein, a bhi 'cladhach tuill ann an aite far nach faigh e gu brath fiach na sgillin ruaidh air son a shaothaireachd?

MUR.- Cha 'n 'eil thu fad am mearachd, a Choinnich, agus cha mhinic a bha, agus fhad 's a bhitheas tu ri sin cha bhi thu ri ni eile, agus cha 'n 'eil comas agad air.

COIN.- Gle cheart, ach is fhad o 'n chual sinn gur "cruaidh a bhi 'breabadh an aghaidh nan dealg."

MUR.- Tha ughdarras againn gu 'm bheil sin ceart, ach an deigh sin, a Choinnich, agus tha thusa cosmhuil ris a' ghiullan Ileach a bha 'breabadh agus a' bualadh a' bhroige ri creig, an uair a ghlaodh e gu 'm "bu mhiosa do 'n chreig na dhi." Mar sin, tha do chuid bhrog-sa a' bualadh nan dealg 'n an smuir, gun dochunn sam bith a dheanamh air do bhrog.

COIN.- Tha mi ga d' thuigsinn gu ro mhaith, ach cha 'n fhuras idir do dh-fhuil agus do fheoil pheacach giulan leis na nithibh sin. Tha e air innseadh dhuinn, gidheadh, gu 'm faigh foighidinn furtachd, agus air an aobhar sin, feumar foighidinn a ghnathachadh gu 'n fhios c'uin a chuireas "cuibhill an fhortain" car dhi.

MUR.- Is maith nach 'eil fios againn air na nithibh a ta chum teachd, oir n' am biodh, cha bhiomaid sona re aoin la; tha iad gu glic' agus gu trocaireach air an ceiltinn uainn. Ach tha 'n t-am agam-sa, a' Choinnich, an gnothuch a thug air car so mi, a chur an ceill duit.

COIN.- Ma ta, Mhurachaidh, cha 'n fhurast do Choinneach Ciobair mar dean e spairn chruaidh chum do thoil-sa a dheanamh a reir a chomais. Ach, a charaid, ciod a th' air d' aire? oir cha 'n ann gun gnothuch a thainig thusa do 'n chearnadh-sa, gun fhios gun aire dhuinn.

MUR.- Innsidh mi mo gnothuch ann am beagan bhriathraibh, a Choinnich, agus 's e so e: tha duil aig Seonaid - a' chaileag is sine againn - ri posadh; agus do bhrìgh gur i a' cheud aon dhe 'n teaghlach a chaidh a mach air an doigh sin, tha sinn a' cur romhainn beagan de na cairdibh a thoirt cuideachd, agus crioman beag bannse a bhi againn; agus thubhairt a' bhean agam nach biodh rath air a' gnothuch mar biodh Coinneach Ciobair, agus a dheagh-bhean, Seonaid maille ruinn. Dh' fheudainn litir a chur ad ionnsaidh, agus dh' fheudadh tusa an litir a dhiultadh; ach an aite sin thainig mi fein, oir air gnais bheirear breith, agus cha ghabh mi diultadh, cha 'n eisd mi ri diultadh, agus cha bhi diultadh 's a' gnothach idir.

COIN.- Dean air do shocair, a charaid, dean air do shocair, agus na tig co ro chas orm. Guidheam ort, thoir cead smuaineachadh agus labhairt dhomh. Sgeul an aigh! Seonaid og gu posadh! Tha i òg da-rireadh, coimh-aois Dhomhnuill againn ach aon tri laithean. Ach co tha i 'faotuinn? - a' chaileag cheanalta agus, bu dual mathar di sin! - co tha i faotuinn?

MUR.- Tha deagh dhuine, duine sìobhalta, duine ionraic, agus duine cothromach, eadhon Seumas, aon mhac fir Ach-an-t-seilich.

COIN.- Oganach ceanalta, tapaidh, tlachdmhor. Fhad 's a chi suilean dhaoine, tuitidh Seonaid òg air a cosaibh an la sin, agus gu robh buaidh agus piseach a' leantuinn nighean a h-athar agus a mathar, uile laithean a cuairt! Ach c'uin tha 'n la taitneach sin a' tighinn, no am bheil e air a shonrachadh fathast?

MUR.- Ud! Ud! 's e tha - tri seachdain o maireach 's e sin a' cheud Dimairt de 'n ath-mhios, ach bithidh duil agam riutsa agus ri Seonaid air deireadh na seachdain roimhe sin, gun ath-sgeul, gu 'n leisgeul sam bith.

COIN.- Ma bhios Seonaid agus mise ann an slainte, ged tha 'n uidh fada, cha diobair agus cha treig sinn ar deagh chairdean 'n am an solais agus am mor-thoilinntinn. Ud, ud! cha treig; oir le falbh trath ni an t-each dubh an gnothuch air mu 'n tig an oidhche. Is mor an t-aobhar taingeileachd a ta aig fear agus aig bean-na-bainnse maraon, gu 'm bheil an athraichean beo slan, fallain, oir "is lom tigh gun bhunait;" no mar thubhairt an t-oran:

"Cha 'n 'eil tlachd sam bith mu 'n tigh,
Cha 'n 'eil tlachd no sealbh;
Gean no gaire cha bhi stigh,
Is fhear-mo-thigh' air falbh."

MUR.- Gu ma h-aighearach dhuit, a Choinnich! dh' aithnich mi gu 'm bu bhard thu, agus a nis thug thu dearbhadh dhomh gu 'm bheil fonn, cail, agus ceol 's a' cheann sin. Feumaidh mi an ath-ghoirid an t-oran sin a chluinntinn o thus gu deis, agus a nis feuch gu 'm bi e air mheothair agad.

COIN.- Ma tha sin chum toileachadh dhuit-se, a Mhurachaidh, ni mi mo dhichioll air an oran sin a ghabhail.

MUR.- Buaidh leat! rach air d' aghaidh, ma ta.

COIN.-

SEISD

Cha 'n 'eil tlachd sam bith mu 'n tigh,

Cha 'n 'eil tlachd no sealbh;

Gean no gàire cha bhi stigh,

Is fear-mo-thigh' air falbh.

'S am bheil làn-chinnt gur fìor an sgéul,

Gu 'm bheil e fallain, slàn?

Bhur cuibhle tilgibh uaibh gu grad;

Cha 'n am gu sniomh an t-snàth.

Cha 'n 'eil tlachd, &c.

An àm gu sniomh no obair so,

Is Cailean dlùth air làimh?

A nuas mo bhreacan, 's théid do 'n phort,

Gu 'fhaicinn tighinn gu tràigh.

Cha 'n 'eil tlachd, etc.

Greas, sguab dhomh taobh an teallaich glan,

'Phoit shomalta cuir air,

A chòta Dòmhnach do dh-Iain beag,

'S a frògan sròil do Cheir.

Cha 'n 'eil tlachd, etc.

Am bróg biodh dubh mar airneagaibh,

An stocaidh bàn mar shneachd,

Gach aon ni 'thoileachadh mo chiall,

'S e 'm faicinn briagh a thlachd.

Cha 'n 'eil tlachd, etc.

Tha dà chearc reamhar anns a' chrò,

A bhiadhadh mios a's còrr;

Grad-shniomh am muineal 's cur air doigh,

Gu cùilm dha 's blasda sògh.

Cha 'n 'eil tlachd, etc.

Is cuirinnich bòrd gu h-eireachdail,

Le h-eilein a's le dealbh,

'Chur fuarain failt' air fear mo ghràidh,

A bha cho fad air falbh.

Cha 'n 'eil tlachd, etc.

O, fair an so mo bhoineid dhomh,

Mo rogha guìn de 'n t-siòd';

'S do bhean a' Bhàille 'n innis mi

Mu Chailean 'thighinn gu tir!

Cha 'n 'eil tlachd, etc.

Mo bhrògan biorach cuiream orm,

Mo stocnais fiamh-ghorm fann,

A los gu 'n toilich fear mo ghaoil
'Sheas fìor 'n a ghaol gun fheall.
Cha 'n 'eil tlachd, etc.

Gur binn a ghuth, gur min a ghlòir,
Mar àileadh 'anail caoin;
Tha fuaim a' chos 's e tighinn a steach,
Mar èun-cheol àit nan craobh.
Cha 'n 'eil tlachd, etc.

Gach fead-ghaoth fhuaraidh gheàmh-radail,
Mo chridhe tròm a chraidh,
Air séideadh seach', 's e tear'nt' am ghlaic,
'S cha dealaich - ach am bàs.
Cha 'n 'eil tlachd, etc.

Ach 'd e chuir dealachadh am cheann?
'S maith dh' fhéudt' gur fad' e 'n céin;
An t-àm ri teachd cha 'n fhac aon neach,
An t-àm tha làthair 's leinn fein.
Cha 'n 'eil tlachd, etc.

Biodh Cailean slàn, 's làn thoilicht' mi,
Cha 'n iarr mi 'n còrr gu bràth;
'S ma bhios mi beò air son a leas,
Gur sona mis' thair chàch.
Cha 'n 'eil tlachd, etc.

An e gu 'n cluinn mi 'ghuth a ris!
Gu 'm faic mi 'ghnùis gun smal!
'S ann 'tha tuaineal inntinn orm,
'S mi 'n-impis dol a ghal.

Cha 'n 'eil tlachd sam bith mu 'n tigh,
Cha 'n 'eil tlachd no sealbh,
Gean no gàire cha bhi stigh,
Is fear-mo-thigh air falbh.

MUR.- Mile taing dhuit, a Choinnich, air son an orain thaitnich sin d' an d' rinn thu fìor-cheartas ga 'sheinn. Is minic a chual mi 's a' Bheurla e, ach am bheil fios fo 'n ghrein co a dh' eadar-theangaich air mhodh co grinn e?*

COIN.- Cha chual mi riamh 's a' Bheurla e, agus ged a chluinneadh, cha mhor a dheanainn-sa dheth; ach tha e anmoch a nis, a' Mhurachaidh, rachamaid le beannachd an Ti a's airde gu tamh, agus na bi mar chearc air groideil theth, ag eirigh 's a' mhadainn. Direach fuirich ad leabaidh gus an duisg mise thu. Fhir mo ruin, deagh chadal duit. Beannachd leat.

MUR.- (*Anns a' mhadainn.*) - Failte na maidne dhuit, a Choinnich! Ma dh' eirich thu gu moch, cha d' thainig thu gu moch 'n am char-sa. Tha e fada 's an la. Mo nair' orm fein! bu choir domh a bhi leth na slighe dhachaidh.

COIN. - Cha bhiodh tu sin ged dh' fhalbhadh tu an uair a thug thu do leabaidh ort, a' Mhurachaidh chòir. Gabh an gnothuch air do shocair. "Cha 'n ann na h-uile la a bhios mod aig Mac an Toisich," agus cha b' fhearr gu 'm biodh.

MUR.- Cha dean e an gnothuch idir, a Choinnich, oir bu choir domh a bhi dhachaidh air airde an fheasgair. Tha liubhairt agam ri ghabhail moch 's a' mhaduinn am maireach á deich fichead caora a cheannaich mi air Feill-Chalamain, gu stoc a chur air aite nam molt air Beinn-a-Chlaiginn, agus feumaidh mi mo chasan a thoirt as.

COIN.- Ciod nach dean fear an airgid, a Mhurachaidh! Ach cha 'n fhalbh cnaimh dhiot gus an teid thu 'mach a dh-fhaicinn a' bheagain cruidh a bhuineas domh-sa.

MUR.- Rachamaid, ma ta, dh'ionnsaidh na buaile a dh'fhaicinn a' bheagain a th'agad, ma 's fìor thu.

COIN.- Beagan da-rìreadh, an coimeas ris a' moran a th' agad-sa thall 's a bhos; ach tha thu ag iomairt gu cruaidh chum do chuid a mheudachadh; agus is minic a chual sinn - "Cha chaill 's a' bhuinnig, am fear nach cuir a chuid an cunnard." A nis, a Mhurachaidh, am bheil thu a' faicinn na bà riabhaich ud?

MUR.- Is mi a tha, agus is maith i. Cha tric a chithear a leithid.

COIN.- Tha laogh 'n a cois; tha deagh bhainne aice; tha i cho soilidh ri uain; air a ceud laogh; agus cha 'n 'eil i na ceithir bliadhna a mach. Tha mi ga 'shonrachadh mar chuspair comain do bhean-na-bainnse - Seonaid og - agus bithidh i na toiseach piseach dhi, le mìle beannachd o Choinneach Ciobair 'n a cois.

MUR.- Tha chomain mò 's mor; ach chi sinn, mar a thubhairt an dall; agus mu chairdeas Seonaid, cha 'n abair mi, ach a mhain - "gur mise 'bha thall 's a chunnaic."

ALASDAIR RUADH

* Translated by the late Rev. Dr Macintyre, Kilmonivaig.

IV

Comhradh eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair

COIN.- Bha dùil agam riut an diugh, a charaid ionmhuinn, agus mìle taing dhuit a chionn nach do mheall thu mi, ach gu'n d'thainig thu air m'iartras, gu bhi lathair aig baisteadh a' bhrogaich bhig a chuir am Freasdal oirnn; ach c'ait a bheil mo bhan-charaid choir do bhean? An e nach d'thainig i maille riut?

MUR. - Ud! Ud! Cha b'urrainn i teachd, a Choinnich; is leoir aon againn a bhi o'n bhaile aig an aon am, oir cha bhiodh gnothuichean rathach, riaghailteach, reidh, na'm fagamaid le cheile an taigh comhladh, oir tha seirbhisich a-nis air atharrachadh an gne agus an dillseachd agus cha'n fhurast aon diubh fhaotuinn anns a bheil fìor earbsadh r'a chur ma thionndaidheas neach a chulaobh.

COIN.- Chan eil comas air, ach bu ro mhaidh leinn uile 'sa Ghoirtean Fraoich, aon seachduin a bhi againn de Mhurchadh Ban agus a chèile ghasda, cheanalta.

MUR.- Mor-thaing dhuit, a Choinnich, ach cha fhreagradh sin, mar a thubhairt mi a cheana; ach mo dhichuimhne! Cia mar a tha Seonaid 'g a faireachadh fein, agus am balach beag?

COIN.- Tha aobhar taingeileachd agam ri radh gu'm bheil iad 'n an dithis mar bu choir doibh a bhi. Tha Seonaid air a cois o cheann seachdain, agus tha 'm brogachan a' fas mar isean geoidh, agus cìod tuilleadh a dh'iarramaid?

MUR.- Cìod tuilleadh a th'aig an leanabh bhochd r'a dheanamh, am feadh 's a ta slainte aige? Cleas nan craobh anns an fhìreach, aig nach 'eil nì sam bith r'a dheanamh ach a bhi 'fàs; gidheadh, m 'a chaomhnar do leanabh-sa, cha 'n e mhain gum fas e, ach fasaidd e ann an gliocas, 's am meudachd, agus le beannachd, ann an deagh-ghean aig Dia agus aig daoineibh.

COIN.- Ma ta, a Mhurchaidh, is maith tha fios agamsa gur e sin durachd do chridhe-sa, agus is taitneach an nì deagh-dhurachd caraid; ach mar a thubhairt thu fein mu na seirbhisich, cha'n'eil fìor chairdean dileas furast ri'm faotainn. Ochan, mo thruaigh an neach sin a tha 'cosnadh dha fein mìghean, agus droch-run a' choimhearsnaich, air olc 's mar a ta an saoghal cha tric leis aimhleas no donas a ghuidhe do neach mar bi aobhar-eigin air a shon.

MUR.- Glé cheart, a Choinnich, 'se dleas'nas nan uile a bhi cuideachadh a cheile, a bhi deanamh maith do aon a' cheile, a bhi 'toirt toiseach agus urraim do aon a' cheile, agus a bhi 'leigeadh ris ar neo-iomlanachd do aon a' cheile. Tha duil agam gu bheil an t-Abstol Seumas a' deanamh so soilleir, an uair a deir e, "aidichibh bhur lochdan d'a cheile, agus deanaibh urnuigh airson a' cheile, chum gu'n tèarnar sibh: tha mor-eifeachd ann an urnuigh dhurachdach an fhìrein."

COIN.- Cha 'n 'eil teagamh air sin, a charaid choir, oir tha Focal na fìrinn 'g a dheanamh cinnteach; ach air an laimh eile, cha'n'eil teagamh nach 'eil cumhachd mor air a cheadachadh do'n aingidh chum a dhroch ruintean a shuidheachadh air an neach sin do nach 'eil speis aige. Tha cuid ann aig a bheil droch-chridhe - 's e sin, cridhe nì's miosa na cridheachan nan uile, a tha maraon air an truailleadh, a thaobh nadair, le nimh a' pheacaidh. Tha cuid ann aig am bheil droch shuil, trid a bheil iad a' deanamh

millidh agus sgrios air cuid dhlighich an coimhearsnaich fein; agus a Mhurchaidh, cha 'n 'eil iad sin idir cneasda, oir cha mhaith do neach sam bith teachd 'n an car!

MUR.- Ubh! Ubh! A Choinnich, am bheil thusa a' creidsinn ann am faoineis agus am baoghaltachd de'n ghne sin? Tha thu a' cur iongantais orm gun teagamh. Is cinnteach gu'm bheil thu ri feala-dha; air neo, feudaidh e bhi gu'm bheil do cheann 'n a bhreislich, no gu'n robh thu a' toirt geill do gheasaibh agus do dhruidheachd an *Sgiathanaich* amaidich sin, a bha air a mheas leat fein mar neach aig an robh seilean 'n a cheann, a thaobh an rothlais a labhair e mu na reultaibh, agus mu thaibhsaireachd, agus nithe eile.

COIN.- Ud, Ud! A Mhurchaidh, is tric a chaidh feala-dha gu feala-rireadh. Agus cha ruig thu' leas a bhi tilgeadh an *Sgiathanaich* orm-sa, oir an uair a mhinich thu fein domh gu'n do labhair e gu ceart, freagarrach mu bhuaidhibh nan reult, cha d'fhosgail mi mo bheul tuilleadh 'n a aghaidh, agus cha'n fhosgail. Ach biodh sin uile mar a dh'fheudas; b' aithne dhomhsa duine a bha air a chunntas 'n a dhuine coir, ceart, ceanalta, a bha 'n a athair, agus 'n a shean-athair, aig an robh seilbh fearainn, agus moran chairdean agus luchd-eolais, agus ni's leoir de nithibh maith an t-saoghail so. Gidheadh, aig a' cheart dhuine so bha droch-shuil! Agus ni ni's iongantais na sin, bha cumhachd millteach na droch shula aige air a ghnathachadh an aghaidh a thoil fein. Rachadh Uilleam Ruadh a mach a dh'amharc air a' bhual-cruidh' aige fein, agus cho cinnteach ri airgead a' bhaistidh, thoisicheadh am mart air an tilgeadh e a shuil ri geumnaich gu cruaidh, agus thuitedh i gu grad marbh air an raon.

MUR.- Tha sin ro iongantach ma tha e fìor, a Choinnich; ach is tric a chual sinn gur i a bho a's miosa tha 'sa bhuaile a's àirde geum.

COIN.- As àirde geum! Feudaidh sin a bhi ceart, a' Mhurchaidh, oir cha 'n fhurast an sean-fhocal a bhreugnachadh; ach cha 'n 'eil sinn gu smuaineachadh gu'm basaich a' bho a's miosa 's a' bhuaile gun aobhar, agus is e an t-aobhar sin, gun teagamh idir, droch-shuil Uilleam Ruadh leis an leis i. Bha 'n teaghlach aige fein co eolach air a' bhuaidh mhi-shealbhar so a bha dluth-cheangailte ris, a's nach leigeadh iad an duine truagh a-mach air an dorus, na'm biodh mart, no each, no caor 'n a fhochair.

MUR.- Cha bu choir ainmhidh sam bith a bhi air ainmeachas an duine sin ma 's e sin an diol a dheanadh e orra; ach biodh sin mar a dh' fheudas, bu choir da sgail a chur air a shuilibh, no an spionadh gu tur as a cheann; agus mo lamh-sa, air da a bhi dh' easbhaidh nan sul, nach abradh neach sam bith an sin gu'n robh droch shuil aig Uilleam Ruadh.

COIN.- Tha thusa, a' Mhurchaidh, a' deanamh magaidh dhe'n ghnothuch, ach creid thusa mise, tha iomadh droch shuil ann. Cha 'n 'eil seachdain o'n dh'innis Ealasaid Nighean Raonuill dhomh gu'n d' thug droch shuil neach-eigin an toradh a bainne gach mairt 'n a buaile, agus ged a chuireadh i ri deanamh a' mhuidh gu ruig an la 'n diugh, nach biodh an crioman a's lugha ime aice airson a' saothreach! B'eiginn di mu dheireadh fios a chur air Donnachadh Glas, agus le seun agus giosagan araidh a ghnathachadh, thug e an toradh gun dail air ais, agus tha crodh Ealasaid an diugh mar bu choir doibh a bhi.

MUR.- O! A Choinnich, a Choinnich, cha robh duil agam riamh agus gu dearbh cha chreidinn o bheul neach eile gu'm bheil thusa cho saobh-chrabhach, agus so-

chreideach! Thoir thusa beannachd uamsa gu Ealasaid Nighean Raonuill, agus innis di a bhi cinnteach 'san aimsir bhlaith so, gu'n sgallt i na measraichean agus na soithichean baine le h-uisge goileach gach maduinn agus feasgair; agus gu'n cum i na mairt-bhainne gun a bhi 'ruith air theas, mar gu 'm biodh an cuthach orra, agus gu'n gnathaich i uisge fuar an tobair ann am pailteas, chum gach cuil, oisinn agus sgeilp mun taigh-bhainne, fhagail fuar, fionnar, agus glan; agus ma ni ise sin, creid thusa mise, nach bi aobhar tuilleadh aice air fios a chur air Donnachadh Glas, no Geal, no air feum a chur air aon seun no giseag a bhuineas da.

COIN.- Ochan! A Mhurachaidh, tha mi faicinn nach 'eil thu a' toirt creideis sam bith do dhroch shuil a bhi aig neach, no cumhachd a bhi aig duine sam bith dochunn a dheanamh air cuid a choimhearsnaich. Am bheil thu a' creidsinn gu'm bheil, na gu'n robh riamh a leithid do ni ann ri buidseachd?

MUR.- Ma ta, a Choinnich, cha 'n 'eil mi creidisnn air sheol sam bith ann am buidseachd; ach tha mi 'creidsinn gu'n robh na miltean a' toirt geill da, agus gu'n d' rinneadh reachdan gun aireamh chum cur as da. Dhealbh Ard-Chomhairle na rioghachd agus Ard-Chomhairle na h-Eaglaise a ris agus a ris laghanna cruaidhe agus teann an aghaidh na buidseachd a chum cur as di, agus an deigh sin uile, cha 'n 'eil mi 'toirt geill gu 'n robh a leithid do ni riamh ann.

COIN.- Tha thu a' cur iongantais orm, a' Mhurachaidh; dh' fheudadh tu a radh air an t-seol cheudna, nach 'eil a leithid de chreutairibh ann ris na sithichean no na daoine-sithe; ach co a bheireadh feart ort, or tha deagh-fhios aig na h-uile gu'n robh iad sin anns gach duthaich agus rioghachd, agus co aig a bheil a dhanadas gu radh, nach 'eil iad fathast ann? Is maith tha cuimhn' agam-sa air seann duine coir anns an Eilean Sgiathanach air an robh Fearchar, agus cha leig mi gu brath air di-chuimhne an t-atachadh a theireadh e roimh 'n bhiadh.

MUR.- Cluinneamaid altachadh Fhearchair oir cha 'n 'eil teagamh agam nach maith e.

COIN.- 'N am do'n chuideachd a bhi 'n an suidhe aig a' bhord, agus an lon deas, theireadh neach-eigin, "Cuir riut, Fhearchair, cuir riut, abair an t-altachadh." Spionadh an seann duine bochd a bhonaid bharr a chinn, shliobadh e sìos na ciabhagan tana, geal aige, thogadh e suas a shuilean, agus theireadh e le guth tiamhuidh, trom na briathran a leanas. "O Thi bheannaichte, cum ruinn agus cuidich leinn, agus na tuiteadh do ghras mar an t-uisge air druim a' gheoidh. An uair a bhios fear 'n a éiginn air gob rutha, cuidich fein leis; agus bi mu'n cuairt duinn air tìr, agus anns gach aite maille ruinn. Gleidh an t-aosda agus an t-og, ar mnathan agus ar paisdean, ar feudal agus ar spreidh o chumhachd agus o cheannas nan sithichean, agus o mhi-run gach droch-shula. Bitheadh slighe réidh romhainn, agus chrìoch shona aig ar turas, Amen."

MUR.- Bu dheagh altachadh a chuir Fearchar suas gun teagamh, ach tha mi 'faicinn gu'n robh e 'toirt creideis do chumhachd nan sithichean agus na droch shula, agus a reir coslais chordadh barailean agus teagasgan mealltach sheann Fhearchair gu ro mhaith riutsa, a' Choinnich, oir tha e soilleir gu'm bheil thu fein agus Fearchar air an aon ramh, mu na nithe faoin agus amaideach sin.

COIN.- Tha iongantais orm, a' Mhurachaidh, nach 'eil aig fear d' aois agus d' fhiosrachadh, lan eòlas air gach beachd agus barail d'an robh na Gaidheil, anns gach

linn, a' toirt geill a thaobh nan nithe sin. Lionadh na chual mise mu 'n timchioll, leabhar co mor ri Eachdraidh na h-Alba nam biodh iad air an sgriobhadh sios; agus air moran diubh tha deagh chuimhn' agam gu ruig an la 'n diugh.

MUR.- Air domh-sa a bhi gu tur aineolach air na nithibh iongantach sin, feumaidh tu, uair-eigin eile, leudachadh orra 'n am eisdeachd, oir ged nach 'eil, a reir mo bheachd-sa, brìgh, no blagh, no tairbhe annta fein, gidheadh tha iad freagarrach chum eolas a thoirt seachad air gnathannaibh, cleachdannaibh, agus saobh-chrabhadh ar luchd-duthcha fein anns na linntibh a dh' fhalbh; oir bithidh beachd ni 's fèarr againn air beannachdaibh an t-soluis, mur a 's mo ar n-eolas air duibhre agus cianalas an dorchadais.

COIN.- Is glic a labhair thu, a' Mhurachaidh, agus is taitneach, tuigseach do bhriathra. Ma bhitheas sinn air ar caomhnadh gu la eile fhaicinn theid sinn cuideachd ann an cuil air chor-eigin, agus ni mise dichìoll air cuid de na nithibh air am bheil cuimhn' agam a leigeadh ris 'n ad éisdeachd. Tha mi 'cluinntinn gun d' thainig am Ministear coir Maighstir Domhnull, agus is suairce, ceanalta e. Do brìgh gu'm feud cabhag a bhi air, tha e cho maith gun dail mhor a chur 's a' ghnòthuch a thug an so e.

MUR.- Tha sin ro cheart, a' Choinnich, oir cha 'n 'eil e beusach no modhail dhuinn fantuinn ni's faide gu 'n fhailt a chur air an uasal urramach a thainig re na slighe so, chum do ghnòthuch-sa a dheanamh. Ach ciod an t-ainm tha thu los a thoirt air an leanabh?

COIN.- Sin agad teisteanas a bhreith, thoir suil air, agus chith thu an t-ainm.

MUR.- Far a-nall e, a' Choinnich, oir an uair a rugadh, a bhaisteadh, agus a phosadh thusa agus mise, cha robh guth air na paipeiribh mor, leathann sin idir, agus air mo shon-sa dheth, cha do ghlaodhadh riamh ann an eaglais mi agus cha do chuir neach riamh an aghaidh mo phosaidh; ach faiceam am paipeir.

COIN.- Sin agad e, agus is mor e a'n asgaidh.

MUR.- "Murachadh Ban!" O! a Choinnich, a Choinnich, an ann mar so tha 'n gnothuch? Ach, stad gus an leugh mi air fad e. "Murachadh, leanabh-mic, a thugadh an lathair le Coinneach," seadh, seadh "agus le Seonaid" Ud, Ud co eile! "agus a chur an ceill gu'n d'rugadh e anns a' Ghoirtean-Fraoich, ann an Sgìreachd ____" ro cheart, agus "ann an Siorramachd ____," seadh, air a leithid so la dhe'n mhìos ____, tha mi 'ga fhaicinn ach nach iad tha curamach eagnuidh, poncail, a Choinnich? Ach car' son, a ghille mo chridh, a thug thu Murchadh Ban air an naoidhean? Cha mhor an t-urram do'n leanabh bhochd Murachadh Ban a thoirt mar ainm air, - ach tha mi 'n dòchas, ____.

COIN.- Bi ad thosd, a Mhurachaidh, tha 'n gnothuch deunta, agus tha 'n gnothuch ceart, oir cha luaith a chual Seonaid gu 'n d' thug i leanabh-mic chum an t-saoghail na thubhairt i, "a Choinnich, ciod air bith a dh'eireas domhsa, ma bhios an leanabh beo, bheir thu Murachadh Ban mar ainm air?"

MUR.- Cha 'n e sin a' cheud chomain a chuir Seonaid orm-sa; rachamaid, ma ta, a dh' fhaicinn a' Mhinistear a' coisrigeadh Mhurachaidh Bhig Bhain anns a' bhaisteadh.

ALASDAIR RUADH

Comhradh Eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair

Coin. "A' Sheonaid, a' Ghraidh nam ban, tha buille aig an dorus; faic co a th'ann, agus fosgail gu h-ealamh."

(Dh'fhosgailleadh an dorus, agus co a leum a steach, ach coigreach gu'n duil ris!)

Coin. Ann an ainm an aigh! Caraide mo ghraidh, Murachadh Ban!"

M. "Coinnichidh na cairdean, an uair nach coinnich na cnuic! Far do lamh, a Sheonaid, is tha mi toilichte t-fhaicinn, agus thusa, a Choinnich, agus a phaisdean gu leir, ciamar a tha sibh air fad? Ochan! is solasach leam aon sealladh eile fhaotuinn de theaghlach a' Ghoirtean-Fraoich."

C. "Ubh! Ubh! a charaid ionmhuinn, is tu tha fliuch o bhonn gu barr, agus cha'n iognadh e, oir a leithid do la le gaoith is uisge, tairneanach agus dealanach, cha'n fhacas anns an tir so o cheann bhliadhnaichean air ais! A' Sheonaid, grad cuir teine 's an t-seomar, gus an ruig do Ghoistidh e fein dh'ionnsuidh a' chraicinn, agus faigh badan tiorma dha le cabhaig. Ach an toiseach, o'n is luaithe deoch na sgeul, faigh lan na fiacail dhe'n stuth a's fearr a th'agad, a' chumail a chridhe ri do charaid ionmhuinn, oir is mor am feum th'aige air, greas ort, a' Sheonaid."

M. Dean socair, a' Choinnich, dean socair, oir, mar a thubhairt an Sean-fhocal, dh'fhuirich do mhathair ri do bhreith, agus cha'n i bu lugha cabhaig. Uime sin, dean socair, glac foighidinn, agus na cuir ceann mo bhan-ghoistidh 'na bhoil, oir cha'n 'eil fuachd idir orm, ged tha mi gu'n teagamh co fliuch 'sa ni uisge mi, oir a' leithid a dh'oidhche cha'n fhaca mi riamh."

C. "An d'thug thu an gearran donn leat, a' Mhurachaidh, no'n do choisich thu?!"

M. "Bha'n gearran agam, ach cha b'urrainn mi dol air a' dhrum leis a' mharachd-sine agus an doininn anradhaich. Chomhlaich mi an greidhear agad aig an stabull a' biadhach nan each, ghabh e uam e, agus cha'n eagal da."

C. "Cha'n eagal idir, oir chith mi fein gach goireas aig a' ghearran bhochd, an uair a bhitheas a mhaighstir 'san t-seomar eile a' faotuinn o Sheonaid gach goireas dha fein."

M. "Cha'n eagal do'n ghearran na dhomhsa, a' Choinnich, air duinn le cheile a bhi fo fhasgadh fhiughantach a' Ghoirtean-Fraoich. Ach, na rach a mach, a' Choinnich, oir cha'n eagal do'n ghearran."

Chaidh e, gidheadh, a mach, agus thug Murachadh an seomar eile air, far an robh an teine lasrach. Ruisg e dheth fein gach bad a bha air; chuir e uime eudach le fear-antighe, agus bha e air a sgeudachadh as ur o mhullach a chinn gu bonn na coise.

C. "Tha mi'n dochas, gu'm bheil thu rud eigin air doigh a nis. Suidh a steach ris a' ghealbhain, gus am feuch Seonaid ciod a ni i air son a Goistidh, 'n am da a bhi sgith, fuar, ocrach, agus paiteach."

M. "A' Choinnich, tha mi 'guidhe nach tilg thu an tigh bun os ceann mar so, air mo shon-sa, oir cha'n 'eil a' bheag a dhith orm tuilleadh."

C. "Ach cia as duit an diugh, a' Mhurachaidh, oir cha'n ann gu'n aobhar araidh a dh'fhag thu am baile air la co fiadhaich agus garbh?"

M. "Nach cual thu a' Choinnich, gu'n d'rinn iad mi 'na m' bhall do Bhord na Sgoile, agus gu boil le m' amhaich, cho'-eignich iad mi chum an dreuchd sin a ghabhail, ged nach 'eil foghlum, no cumhachd, no cleachd, no buaidh agam chum a choimhlionadh

gu freagarrach. Ach cha'n eisdeadh iad ri diultadh, agus sparr iad m'ainm sìos, mar le aon ghuth, olc air mhaith leam fein e."

C. "Rinn iad gu ceart, oir ma tha urram 'san dreuchd, tha thusa airidh air; ma tha feabhas ann, is tusa a' mheudaicheas e; agus ma tha buannachd ann do dh'oigridh na sgìreachd, co as fearr aig am bheil fios air an leas, na mo charaid dileas, tuigseach, Murachadh Ban? Tha aon nì cinnteach, agus is e sin, gu'n d'fhuair a' Ghaelig choir aon dhian-charaid, agus gu'm faicear a nis i air a teagasg anns gach Sgoil mu'n cuairt duinn."

M. "Cum do theangaidh, a' Choinnich, oir tha mise tuilleadh 's sean gu bhi air mo ghlacadh le brosgul agus miodal mar sin. Cha dean e'n gnothuch idir."

C. "Ach, an robh a'm Bord cruinn an diugh, agus ma bha, c'ait, agus c'uin?"

M. "Bha e cruinn aig uair thrath an diugh ann an Tigh-Osda Druim-a-chabair, far an d' rainig mise, agus a' chuid a's mo de Bhuill a' Bhuird an raoir, gu bhi deas gu toiseachadh air cuisean a chur air an aghaidh moch 'sa mhaduinn; agus Ochan! bha la buileach garbh againn, an da chuid a thaobh aimsir, agus a thaobh dian-dheasboireachd gu'n bhaigh."

C. "Ubh! Ubh! ciod mu'n robh sibh co dian ri sin, agus ciod a b'aobhar do'n aimhreit a bh'ann?"

M. "Bha sinn cruinn mu'n da thigh-sgoile, seadh an da chaisteal sin a tha nis deas, chum an gabhail o lamhaibh an luchd-ceairde a thog iad, agus chum Maighstirean-Sgoile a roghnachadh air an son; 's iad sin Sgoil Druim-a'-Phobuill, agus Sgoil Loinnam-ba."

C. "B'iad sin na sgoiltean daora, agus cha bheag an uallach iad air an tuath bhochd, air am bheil trom-chisean air an leagadh a ta 'cumail an ceann an comhnuidh fo'n uisge."

M. "Ro cheart, a Choinnich, tha gach sgoil dhiubh so a' teachd gu beagan thairis air ceithir cheud deug punnd Sassunnach, agus sin a thuilleadh air duais a' Mhaighstir-Sgoile, agus sgaoth de luchd-dreuchd eile. Tha na cuisean trom, trom gu'n teagamh."

C. "Dh'fhalbh Peairt! Cha'n urrainn na tuathanaich bhochda seasamh ri sin: - ach, a' Sheonaid, goil an coire dubh, oir is fearrd do Ghoistidh dileag, bheag, bhath, mu'n gabh sinn an Leabhar, agus mu'n d'theid sinn mu thamh. Seadh, a Mhurachaidh, chuir mi casg air do chainnt, ciod tuilleadh mu'n robh sibh a'm badaibh a' cheile?"

M. "Ciod tuilleadh! Ochan! bha sinn ann am fionnsgain a' cheile mu'n Ghaelig. Cha bu lugh na ceithir pearsa deug a chuir litrichean le teastanais, a stigh air son a bhi 'nam maighstiribh 'sna sgoiltibh ura sin, agus ghabh am Bord da uair an uaireadair chum an leughadh a mach ann an eisdeachd nan uile."

C. "Ach, ciod an gnothuch a bh'aig an obair sin ris a' Ghaelig, a' Mhurachaidh?"

M. "Ris a' Ghaelig! Anns a' cheud dol a mach, dh'eirich Fear-Choiremhuiltin, agus thubhairt e, Cha'n 'eil ach gann lide dhe'n Bheurla aig an oigridh leis an lionar na sgoilean sin, agus uime sin, tha e ceart agus reusonta gu'm biodh a' chlann air an teagasg, an da chuid ann an cainnt am mathair fein, agus anns a' chainnt eile, agus feumaidh na maighstirean sgoile a thaghar eolas a bhi aca air a' Ghaelig."

C. "Bha sin gu'n teagamh ro fhreagarrach, agus cha b'urrainn ach duine gu'n tuigse cur 'na aghaidh."

M. "Chum gu'n tuig thu an gnothuch, a Ghoistidh, cha robh a lathair ach cuignear dhe'n Bhord, oir cha b'urrainn seann Mhaighstir Domhnull coir, am Ministear,

tighinn a mach. Bha Fear an Druim-Sheillich anns a Chathair, agus cha robh air taobh na Gaelig ach Fear Choiremhuitein agus mi fein. Air an taobh eile, bha Fear-Chiaraig, agus an t-Oganach sin Cormac, a thainig o cheann ghoirid gu bhi 'na Bhailidh aig an uachdaran. Cha dubhairt Fear-Chiaraig a bheag, ach cha'n aontaicheadh e leis an taobh againne. Chaidh na teisteanais a rannsachadh an dara uair, agus a'm measg na maighstirean-sgoile, bha cuignear aig an robh deagh chliu a thaobh an eolais air Gaelig, agus bha iad co ard ri cach, mar robh nis airde ann am fiosrachadh mu nithe eile. Dh'eirich mise, agus dh'ainmich mi Domhnall Mac Fhearchair, agus Lachlunn Mac Lachluinn, mar mhaighstirean freagarrach air son an da sgoile, agus dh'eirich air ball Fear-Choiremhuitein gu aontachadh le sin. Ann sin ghrad-dh'eirich am ballach Gallda sin Cormac air bhonnaibh, agus shonraich e dithis eile dhiubhsan aig nach robh Gaelig. Le so bha dithis dhe'n Bhord air gach taobh, agus uime sin, thuit an crannchur-taghaidh air Fear an Druim-Sheillich, air da a bhi 'sa chathair, ach cha toireadh e aonta fein air taobh seach taobh; agus air an aobhar sin, tha na sgoilean gun mhaighstirean, gus am bi am Bord cruinn a ris."

C. "Tha mi 'tuigsinn a' ghnothuich gu gasda, a' Mhurachaidh, ach an sin, nach robh gnothuch an latha thairis?"

M. "Bha, ach cha robh connsachadh, agus dian-dheasboireachd an latha thairis, oir dh'eirich am beadagan beag-naireach sin Cormac suas, agus chain e na Gaidheil agus a' Ghaelig ann am briathraibh a chuir fuil Mhurachaidh Bhain air ghoil 'na chuislibh, ach mo lamh-sa, a' Choinnich, gu'n d'fhuair e caineadh, nach dichuimhnich e an da la so."

C. "Cha'n fhaca mi riamh e; chual mi gu'n d'thainig e, ach comadh co dhiubh, ciod is coslas do'n truaghan gu'n diu?"

M. "Ciod is coslas da? an e thubhairt thu? Ochan! n'am faiceadh tu e, cha mhor a shaoileadh tu dheth; oir, cha'n 'eil ann ach ablach beag, bronnach, briathrach, biorach, buidh-bhan, le teangaidh dhubh-ghallda mar chlaban na muilne! Cha robh focal ni bu mhiosa na cheile nach do ghnathaich e a'n aghaidh nan Gaidheal. Chuir e an ceill gu'n robh iad leasg, lunndach, mairnealach, diomhanach, mi-churamach, gu'n seadh, gu'n suim, gu'n solar air son an droch latha; agus nach robh 'nan canain ach fiadh-bhriathran allta, mi-chaomha, borb - no mar theireadh e fein, "uncouth, wild, barbarous, senseless, gibberish." Thubhairt mise ris, a' crathadh an duirn ri 'shroin, gu'm bu mhaith dha an la agus an linn 'san d'rugadh e, oir n'an nochdadh e am mihodh ceudna a'm measg nan Gaidheal roimh so, cha b'fhad gus an cuireadh iad a sheic air an sparr, no gad m'a shealbhan."

C. "Ubh! Ubh! a' Ghraidh nam fear, bha na cuisean garbh 'nar measg, ach ciod an ceannriche a thainig orra?"

M. "Ma dheireadh, leum Fear Choremhuitein air a chosaibh, agus a' tionndadh ri Cormac, thubhairt e, Oganaich gu'n naire gu'n mhodh, gu'n ghliocas, gun tuigse, chomhairlichinn dhuit srian a chur an deigh so air do theangaidh nimhnich, oir cha cheadaichear tuilleadh a leithid de bhriathraibh a bhi air an gnathachadh ann an comunn uasal, ceanalta mar so. Tha thusa, led' dhanadas cainnte a' taisbeanadh t-aineolais fein, agus a toirt gach dearbhaidh nach duin'-uasal thu. A bhaoghain gu'n diu, n'am biodh tuigse na circe agad, chitheadh tu an strith a ta 'ga dheanamh a'm fad 'sam farsuing chum na Gaidheil agus an canain dhruigheach ath-leasachadh agus a chumail suas. Chum na criche so tha comunnan da rireadh daimheil, air an

suidheachadh, ach beag, anns gach baile-mor 'san rioghachd Bhreutainnich! Agus cha'n e sin a mhain, ach tha daoine urramach, measail, agus foghlumte anns gach aite chum leas nan Gaidheal agus na Gaelig a chur air aghaidh. Faic a' Bhanrighinn ghradhach a ta 'riaghladh thairis oirne, agus tha a tlachd-san do na Gaedheil co mor 's nach 'eil i toilichte ach a'm feadh 's a ta i 'nam measg. Faic ard-uaislean foghlumte na tire air fad, agus tha'n speis aca do'n Ghaelig mor. Faic an t-Olladh Blackie fein,² agus nach dian, dichionnach e chum a' Ghaelig a shuidheachadh air sheol 's nach d'theid i as gu brath! Tilg do shuilean air sgaoth de dhaoineibh urramach eile, a ta air an deachdadh leis an spiorad cheudna. Faic ministirean ainmeil dhe gach eaglais - Siorraman - ard-luchd-lagha - agus daoine foghlumte dhe gach dreuchd, agus tha iad uile air an aon ramh. Air an laimh eile, thoir fanear na nithe cudthromach a tha air an clodh-bhualadh gu riaghailteach chum na criche cheudna. Tha'n t-Ard-Albannach fein ann am baile Inbhirneis a' dol gu dhulan anns an obair thaitneach so, agus nach eugsamhla, iomadh-gnetheach a chomhairlean gu leir, chum cliu agus ceanaltas nan Gaidheal a dheanamh aithnichte. Anns a' bhaile cheudna, baile-cinn na Gaidhealtachd, tha'm Mios-leabhar aluinn sin, ris an abrar 'sa 'Bheurla (Celtic Magazine) a' togail a chinn gach miosa, agus le teangaidh ealanta, deas-chainntich, tha e a' leagadh ris gach feart agus buaidh, gach gaisg' agus treubhantas, gach cleachd agus reachd, air son am bheil sliochd urramach nam beann comharraichte. Cha ghabh uile-bhuaidhean a' Mhiosachain ghrinn so a luaidh 'san am. Cuireadh gach Gaidheal fios air fein, agus air an Ard-Albannach, agus chith iad le'n suilibh an oirdheirceas aca maraon. Tha deagh fhios againn uile, mar an ceudna, gu'm bheil "Gaidheal" eile ann am baile Dhunedin fo lan-eididh, a tha 'dol a mach gach mios air a thurasaidh chum chrìochan iomallach na Gaidhealtachd, agus chum thirean an cein, luchdaichte leis gach fiosrachadh chum eolas dheth gach gne a sgapadh a'm measg a luchd-duthcha fein.³ So agaibh an Gaidheal d'a rìreadh, a tha 'dol a'm boinn ri Mios-leabhar Inbhirneis, agus ris an Ard-Albannach, chum Sliochd nam beann ardachadh anns an inbh sin a thoill iad 's an Eilean Bhreatannach. Agus a thuilleadh orra so gu leir, tha oganach eile dhe'n fhìor ghne ann an Glaschu, a tha gu dian a' togail a' chinn, agus a' deanamh spairne chruidh chum cos-cheumanna na cuideachd eile a leantuinn. Gu robh piseach air, agus deagh bhuaidh leis. Is esan d'a rìreadh "Mac-talla" nam beann, nan gleann, 'snan creag - a tha 'deanamh a dhìchill chum gu'm bi gach cuis agus comhradh a co'-fhreagairt d'a cheile, gu slighe reidh a ghearradh a mach, air an triall gach eolas dh'ionnsuidh fardaichean nan Gaidheal.⁴ Anis, eisd ri so, a' Chormaich shuarach, ach dh'aindeoin na theirear, tha thusa, le ladarnas beag-narach, a' seasamh suas aig a' Bhord so, an aghaidh saoirbheas, agus sonais, agus leas mhuinntir na tire so, anns nach 'eil anam a ta 'g altachadh do bheatha 'nam measg. Uime sin, duin do bheul gu grad, agus na biodh a' chridhe agad tuilleadh, do theangadh leomach a ghluasad an aghaidh canain no cleachd na cuideachd sin a bha riamh dileas d'an

² John Stuart Blackie, Professor of Greek at Edinburgh University who was instrumental in setting up the first Chair of Celtic.

³ This seems to be *An Gaidheal* itself, in which this dialogue was published.

⁴ It is unclear to which periodical he is referring as the only *Mac-Talla* I am aware of in the nineteenth century was that published by Jonathan MacKinnon in Cape Breton between 1892 and 1904. It is also referred to in the following dialogue in this appendix.

Rìgh, agus d'an tìr, agus a bhios gu brath cliu-thoilltinneach air son an gnìomhara cruadalach, an dillseachd, agus an euchd."

C.- "Mo mhìle beannachd air Fear-Choiremhuiltin! Och! nach treun a labhair e, agus nach buileach a smal e sìos am Baillidh beag, biorach Cormac? Ach thoill e na fhuaire e, agus ged a gheibheadh e tuilleadh, cha bhiodh dolaidh ann. Tha reusan a' giulan, agus tha uile chairdean tuigseach nan Gaidheal a' dearbhadh, gu'm bu choir a' Ghaelig agus a' Bheurla a bhi air an teagasg, anns na crìochaibh so maraon, agus cuideachd do'n oigridh 'nar sgoilibh. Feumaidh so a bhith, chum gu'm biodh an aon chanain air a mineachadh leis a' chanain eile. Mar so, teagaisgear eolas do'n oigridh air co'-dhealbhachd na Gaelig, agus eadhon dhoibhsan a ta air an sonrachadh gu bhi 'searmonachadh an t-Soisgeil. Anns an la an diugh tha moran de mhinisteiribh oga nach d'fhuair an cothrom so, air feadh na Gaidhealtachd, gu tur eu-comasach air labhairt ann am briathraibh taitneach, a thaobh an aineolais air a' Ghaelig. Bha oganach tapaidh o cheann ghoirid a' searmonachadh 'san Eaglais againne, agus ged is nar dhomh a radh, is minic a thug e snodh-gaire orm leis na mearachdan a bha e 'deanamh, le bhi gu tric a' cur na cartach air thoiseach air an each! Bha seann Seonaid Nic Dhughail 'san eisdeachd, agus 'n am di eiridh gu falbh, thubhairt i, "Ochan! Ochan! ma's e sud am ministear a tha gu bhi air a shuidheachadh anns a' Chlachan Uaine, cha'n 'eil farmad agam riu-san a bhios 'ga eisdeachd, oir a 'leithid de thruaillleadh Gaelig, agus de ghlucaireachd cainnte, cha chual mi riamh! Ochan! Cha b'e seann Mhaighstir Seumas againn fein, gu'm beannaichear e." Mar so thug Nic Dhughail a barail fein gu'n cheilg, agus bha i ceart. Tha dochas agam, uime sin, a' Mhurachaidh, an uair a bhios am Bord cruinn a ris, gu'n steidhich iad air maighstirean-sgoile ceart agus freagarrach, agus gu'n druid iad beul a' Bhaillidh bhig, agus gu'm faigh uile chairdean na Gaelig a' bhuaidh-larach 'san strìth."

M.- "Sin thu, a' Choinnich, is truagh nach robh thu fein air a' Bhord; ach comadh co dhiubh, cha strìochd sinne, gus an daingnich sinn maighstir co Gaidhealach ri Coinneach Ciobair, anns gach sgìreachd ris am bheil ar gnothuch."

C.- "Mìle taing dhuìt, a' Ghraidh nam fear, tha Seonaid ag eigheach oirnn - tiugainn, tiugainn, thugamaid ceann-shuas an tighe oirnn', a dh'fhaicinn cìod an goireas a tha romhainn."

ALASDAIR RUADH

VI

Comhradh Eadar Murachadh Ban agus Coinneach Ciobair

Coinn.- "Thainig thu, a Mhurachaidh, mar a gheall thu, agus feumaidh mi a radh, agus a radh le toilinntinn, nach do mheall thu riamh orm na d' ghealladh on cheud la air an do chuir sinn eolas air a cheile. Fhuair mi do litir an de, a' cur an ceill gu'm faicinn an diugh 'sa Ghoirtean Fraoich thu, agus a nis tha mo dha shuil a' togail fianuis gu'm bheil mo ghoistidh firinneach, mar a bha, agus mar a bhitheas e, fhad 'sa bhios an deo ann. Thig air d'aghaidh, dean suidhe, agus faigheam do naigheachd gus an tig Seònaid as a' mhainnir a dh'fhaotuinn ni-eigin a bhlathaicheas thu."

Mur.- "Na cuir dragh no trioblaid sam bith ort fein, a' ghraidh nam fear, cha'n 'eil dad a dhith orm, oir cha'n 'eil ach uine ghoirid on dh'fhag an gearran donn agus mi fein an Tom-aitinn, far an do chuir mi an oidhche seachad maille ri 'r seann charaid coir Seumas Mor, agus b'e sin esan?"

Coin.- Tha thu ceart a' Mhurachaidh, oir bha eolas agam air Seumas coir mu'n deachaidh e Thom-aitinn, agus tha seachd bliadhna deug o sin, - agus coimhearsnach ni's cinneadaile na Seumas Mor, cha do chuir cas ann an cuarain riamh.

Mur.- Tha 'n fhirinn agad a Choinnich, is duine e aig am bheil mor-fhiosrachadh, gu sonraichte mu gach ni a bhuineas do na Gaidheil agus do'n Ghaidhealtachd. Tha 'm bord aige air a chomhdachadh leis gach paiper agus leabhar a tha gan cur a-mach mu chànain bhlàsda, bhinn ar dùthcha. Ochan, tha,- chunnaic mi an-sin, *an t-Ard-Albannach, an Ceilteach, an Gaidheal, Mactalla Ghlascho* agus sgaoth de leabhraichibh eile mar a ta *An Teachdaire Gaidhealach, Cuairtear nan Gleann, Fear-Tathaich nam Beann*, agus na h-uiread eile air nach eil cuimhne agamsa. Duine nas taitniche na Fear an Tuim-aitinn chan fhaca mi o cheann fada.

Coin.: Tha esan mar sin, a Mhurachaidh, agus an uair a gheibh e greim air neach d'am bheil tlachd aige, chan fhurasd leis dealachadh ris.

Mur.: Furasd! cha d'fhuair mi dh'ionnsuidh mo leapach gu dà uair 'sa mhadainn an-diugh, air duinn a bhith 'labhairt mu chleachdannaibh nan Gaidheal agus gu sònraichte mu na Sean-fhocail ghrinn sin a ghnathaicheadh leò.

Coin.: Tha mi 'n dùil nach eil treubh sluaigh fon ghrèin aig am bheil cho lìon sean-fhocal 'sa ta aig na Gaidheil.

Mur.: Tha thu ceart, a Choinnich, ach mo leòn, bithidh mòran diubh air an call,- agus tha mòran diubh air an call a cheana, do bhrìgh nach robh iad air an tionaladh, agus air an clodh-bhualadh ann an leabhar le neach eigin comasach air sin a dhèanamh. Bha mi comhairleachadh do Fhear an Tuim-aitinn sin a dhèanamh mar bu mhath leis.

Coin.: Chan fhurasd fear fhaotainn aig am bheil an cumhachd, an toil, agus an ùine, chum na nithe luachmhor sin a chruinneachadh. Chan aithne dhomh neach a tha freagarrach air a shon.

Mur.: Is aithne dhomhsa a thaobh iomraidh duin'-uasal foghlaimte suairce, cinneadail, aig am bheil cumhachd chum na Sean-fhocail sin a chruinneachadh, agus a chruinnich, tha mi 'n dùil na h-uiread dhiubh a cheana, agus tha mi 'n dòchas gun tèid e air aghaidh gus an toir e an obair thaitneach sin gu crìch.

Coin.: Cò e an t-uasal foghlaimte sin a tha 'san amharc agad, a Mhurachaidh, agus càit am bheil e?

Mur.: Thachair thu fhèin ris roimhe so a Choinnich, ma tha cuimhn' agad air, ann an Ard-chuirt nam Morar-dearga ann an Dun Eideann, an uair a chuir e a làmh air do ghualainn, agus a thuirt e gun robh thu 'nad dheagh fhianais.

Coin.: Ochan! a ghràidh nam fear, tha deagh chuimhne agam air, agus bithidh fhads is beò mi - an Siorram MacNeachdail!⁵ Mo mhìle beannachd air a cheann.

Mur.: Deich mìle beannachd nam biodh sin chum feum dhasan, ach "Cha lion beannachd brù". Comadh co dhiubh, a Choinnich, mas fìor aithris nan uile aig am bheil eòlas air an uasal cheanalta sin, chan fhurasd a choimeas fhaotainn. Tha sean-fhocal ag ràdh "Nach d'fhuaras saoi gun a shamhuil", ach tha dùil agam gum breugnaichear an Sean-fhocal leis an diùlnach àlainn uasal seo, oir càit am faighear a choimeas? Gu robh buaidh leis a bhos agus thall. A leithid chan fhaighear, oir tha eagal orm gun do chailleadh a' mholltair 'san d'rinneadh e.

Coin.: Tha mi 'n dòchas gun gabh e na Sean-fhocal os làimh, agus gun cruinnich e iad mar sheudan luachmhor chum nach caillear a h-aon dhiubh.

Mur.: Bu ro mhath leam gun gabhadh na h-uiread do na daoineibh comasach air feadh Gaidhealtachd agus eileana na h-Alba, an obair seo os làimh, agus gach Sean-fhocal 'nan crìochaibh fhèin a theasairginn. Bheirinn an t-Eilean Sgiathanach do 'Chreag-Ghoiridh'⁶, agus ochan! chan fhaighear a shamhuil 's na ceàrnaibh sin no faodaidh e bhith ann an ceàrnadh sam bith eile a thaobh farsuingeachd eòlais-san mu gach nì mun cuairt da. Cha mhòr nach cuir e fallas air 'Bun-Lochabar'⁷ fhèin teachd suas ris anns na h-uiread de nithibh. Ach biodh sin mar a dh'fheudas, cuireadh 'Creag-Ghoiridh' gach Sean-fhocal a thig 'na char dh'ionnsuidh an *Ard-Albannach* agus gabhaidh esan cùram diubh, agus bithidh iad air a teasairginn gu bràth.

Coin.: 'Se sin dìreach an seòl ceart, a Mhurachaidh, agus cha chuireadh e dragh mòr air 'Creag-Ghoiridh', ged nach smuainich e air dragh chum math a dhèanamh, oir tha e an comhnaidh ullamh chum eòlas dhe gach gnè a chraobh-sgaoileadh.

Mur.: Ro cheart, a Choinnich, fàgaidh sinn an t-Eilean Fada, ma ta, aig 'Creag-Ghoiridh', agus bheir sinn taobh an iar na h-Alba don ghaisgeach threun sin eile 'Bun-Lochabar', agus chan fhàg iad Sean-Fhocal aig bodach no caillich 'nan crìochaibh air nach dèan iad greim agus nach cuir iad dh'ionnsuidh an *Ard-Albannach*.

Coin.: Bu mhòr agus bu luachmhor an obair a bhiodh an sin nan tugadh iad gu crìch i.

Mur.: Obair mhòr gun teagamh. Bha fear an Tuim-aitinn agus mi fhèin a' toirt fainear nach eil cor na staid anns am faod duine a bhith air son nach faighear Sean-fhocal freagarrach. Mas clann a th'ann, tha 'n Sean-fhocal ag ràdh; 'Nì na big mar a chì na big'. Mas muinntir a th'ann aig nach eil cùram no spèis do ghrunndalas, tha rabhadh aca 'san t-Sean-fhocal:-

'Se 'm buileachadh nì 'n cruinneachadh,

'Se 'n cruinenachadh nì sguaban;

Na sguaban nì na mulain,

A's na mulain nì na cruachan.

⁵ Sheriff Alexander Nicolson, whose *Gaelic Proverbs* was published in 1881.

⁶ Alexander Carmichael is signified here by the name of his home in Benbecula.

⁷ Nether Lochabar / Bun-Lochabar was the pen name of the Rev. Alexander Stewart (1829-1901), minister in Ballachulish.

Coin.: Sin thu fèin, a Ghoistidh! Tha mi 'g earbsadh gun aithris thu tuilleadh dhomh dhe na Gnath-fhoclaibh thaitneach sin.

Mur.: Tha thu 'g earbsadh, a Choinnich, ach nach cual thu riamh, 'Gur miosa droch earbsadh na bhith falamh'?

Coin.: Chan iarrar air duine dona ach a dhìcheall - agus mas fìor sin, iarrar tuilleadh air deagh dhuine cosmhuil riut fhèin, a Mhurachaidh, a tha fiosrach air gach reachd, gach cleachd, agus gach comhradh. Tha am feasgar a' sìneadh, tha a' chamhanaich a' dol am faidead, agus tha ùine nas leòir againn mun gabh sinn gu tàmh, gu bhith a' leudachadh agus a' labhairt air na nithibh taitneach so.

Mur.: Tha 'n fhìrinn 'nad bheul, a charaid, agus is minic a bha. Gun teagamh tha am feasgar ag èaladh a-mach, agus tha 'n oidhche ga drùidheadh fhèin fo chrìochaibh camhann, ach chan fhad gus am faicear 'Car eile ann an adharc an daimh'. Chan eil an ùine ach garr gus am bi a là fhèin aig an oidhche agus gus an tilg i cuirtean farsaing dorchadais thairis air a' cheàrnaidh so dhen chruinne chè. Agus fiù an caochladh seo ann an tràthaibh na h-aimsire, cha d'fhàg ar roimh-aithriche gun Ghnàth-fhocal oir thuirt iad:-

Mar bhoin chaoil a' triall gu teach.

Thig feasgar earraich air gach neach;

Ach mar chloich a' ruith le gleann

Thig feasgar fionn foghair.

Coin.: Mo bheannachd agad, a ghràidh nam fear, is tu fhèin a chuireadh rogha caoin air comhradh, ach gabh mo leisgeul car tiota beag oir tha neach eigin aig an doras gam iarraidh.

Mur.: Thoir an doras ort, ma ta, ach grad thill. Na biodh faiteachas sam bith ort mise fhàgail leam fèin. Dèan do ghnòthach agus cuimhnich 'Gur dana cù air otraich fhèin', - no mar a deir cuid, 'Gur làidir coileach air otraich fhèin'. Uime sin, a Choinnich chòir, mas cù no coileach thu - tha mi 'g iarraidh maitheanas ort, dèan do ghnòthach agus pill gun dàil.

Coin.: Bha mo ghnòthach cianail tubaisteach, agus ro-mhì-rianail. Tha cuimhne agad gun do phòs Dòmhnall Fidhleir an aghaidh toil a mhàthar, nighean Sheumais Ghlais, agus on là air an deachaidh iad cuideachd, bha na mnathan ann an sgornaibh a chèile. Bha 'n t-seana-bhean gam iarraidh aig an doras, le gnùis làn fola o bhuillibh na mnà òige, chum gun deanainn an rèite suas eatorra.

Mur.: Ubh! Ubh! is cianail an ghnòthach sin da rìreadh, a Choinnich, ach is minic a thachair e, oir tha 'n Sean-fhocal ag ràdh:-

Mar dhobhrain am bun uisge,

Mar sheabhag gu eun slèibhe;

Mar chù gu cat, 's mar chat gu luch,

Tha bean mic gu a màthair-chèile.

Coin.: Ochan! tha 'n Sean-fhocal fìor a thaobh sin, mar a chunnaic mise aig an doras a chianamh, agus chan fhurast an t-olc a leigheas, oir 'Cha soirbh seabhag a dhèanamh dhen chlamhan'. Ach, a Mhurachaidh, chan eil mise idir gleusda air na Gnath-fhocail a tha am measg nan Gaidheal a chumail nam chuimhne, ged a chuala mi na ceudan dhiubh. Och mise, b'iad na mnathan a bha aig an doras gam iarraidh a bha garg, agus gu sònraichte a' bhean òg, ach 'Is maith nach eil iuchraichean an domhain fo chrìos na h-aoin mhnà'!

Mur.: Air m'fhocal, a Choinnich, tha thu 'a labhairt gu gleusda, oir 'Is buidhe le bochd beagan'. Tha stòras nach beag de na glic-bhriathraibh sin agad nad cheann, oir, 'An nì nach eil 'sa cheann, chan aithrisear ach gu gann leis an teangaidh'. Is minic a chual sinn, 'Nach eil saibhreas r'a fhaotainn as na faochagan falamh'. Seadh a charaid, is mòr do thlachd do gach nì a bhuineas do na Gaidheil, agus cha bheag do spèis d'an cuideachd. Is mòr sunnd do chridhe an uair a thig *an Ceilteach* ceanalta agus *an t-Ard-albannach* allail dhachaidh 'nad ionnsuidh. Is mòr an solas dhuit a bhith nam fochair agus a bhith a' cnuasachadh an eachdraidh agus a bhith a' beachdachadh air an euchdaibh. Tha a bheachd agus a mhiann fèin aig gach duine reusanta agus aig gach creutair fon ghrèin; oir nach tug thu riamh fainear an fhirinn shoilleir so, gur e

Miann bà braon,

Miann caora teas,

Miann gaibhre gaoth

'S a bhith 'n aodann creig

Coin.: Is gasda a dh'fhàg thu e, a Mhurachaidh, ach b'fheàrr leam gun tugadh Seònaid a' chlann leatha gu ceann eile an taighe oir cha chluinn sinn sinn-fhèin le 'n gleadhraich.

Mur.: Leig leis na paidibh bochda, chan eil iad ri lochd sam bith, oir is taitneach a bhith gam faicinn ri mireadh agus ri cluich gun cheilg. An cual thu riamh, 'Taigh gun ghean, gun ghàire?'

Coin.: A Mhurachaidh chòir, tha 'n oidhche a' tarraing, feumaidh sinn a bhith nis a' bogadh nan gad oir tha Seònaid ag èigheach oirnn, agus cha mhiste sinn dol ga faicinn. 'Is e deireadh gach comuinn dealachadh', ach tha dòchas agam gun comhlaich sinn a-ris ann an slàinte agus le comas comhraidh 'sa mhadainn. 'Bithidh sinn beò an dòchas ro mhath'. Oir,

Thig ri uair nach tig ri aimsir,

Thig ri là nach tig ri linn.

Thèid sinn a-nis mu thàmh, an dòchas gum faicear slàn 'sa mhadainn sinn.

SGIATHANACH

VII Ionraic MacAilein

Caib. I

1. Ainm agus cinneach Ionraic. 4. Na trioblaidean a thàinig air. 7. An ceàrd-umha agus a mhì-chreideamh. 12. Urnaigh an duine bhoichd. 16. An ceàrd-umha a' tachairt ri Ionraic.

1. Agus bha duine ann d'am b'ainm Ionraic MacAilein, do thrèubh nan Gaidheal, á baile a' Chamloch, ann an crìochaibh na Gaidhealtachd, agus ann an siar-shraithibh na dùthcha.

2. Agus tharladh gun robh Ionraic 'na dhuine glic agus foghlaimte, ach trid freasdail an Tighearna thàinig àmhghar agus bròn 'na char, ghearradh as a theaghlach gu lèir, thàinig am bàs gu h-obann air a' mhnaoi, agus air a' chuid mhac agus nighean, agus bhuaileadh e fhèin le laigsinn agus tinneas.

3. Bha Ionraic gu trom air a chlaoidh, gidheadh, cha do thrèig e Dia aithriche. Bha fios aige gun robh an Tì as Airde a' dèanamh nithe mòra nach comas rannsachadh a-mach, agus nithe mìorbhuileach nach gabh àireamh a thaobh an lìonmhorachd.

4. Ach mu dheireadh dh'fhàs trioblaidean an duine bhoichd seo tuilleadh 's searbh; bha e sàraichte air uachdar an talmhainn, agus bha 'anam sgìth da bheatha.

5. Gidheadh, cha do dhì-chuimhnich e Ti Naomh Israeil, oir thuirt e gu bheil tròcair agus gràdh air am foillseachadh 'na uile ghnìomharaibh.

6. Air don duine àmhgharach seo a bhith air a chromadh le h-aois, agus air a leònadh le bochdainn b'èiginn da mu dheireadh an Camloch fhàgail chum dol a dh'iarraidh na dèirce.

7. Air là de na làithibh sheas e aig doras taighe duine a bha ro shaibhir, ceàrd-umha àraidh a chàrn suas mòran beartais, agus aig an robh mòr-aitreibh, feudail, agus seilbh de gach gnè.

8. Chuir Ionraic fàilt air a' cheàrd-umha, agus bheannaich se e.

9. Ach thionndaidh an ceàrd ris an duine aosda, agus thuirt e gu fiadhaich, feargach ris, "Ciod e do ghnòthach-sa an-seo, a bhodaich thruaillidh, shalaich, thoir do chasan às, oir mur siubhail thu air ball, cuiridh mi na coin 'nad dhèidh".

10. "Dèan foighidinn, a dhuin'-uasail", a deir Ionraic, "dèan foighidinn agus èisd rium. Chuir àmhghar agus sean aois á obair mi; tha mi uime sin, a-nis 'gam thilgeadh fhèin air Freasdal Dè, agus air càirdeas dhaoine truacanta, agus chan eagal dhomh".

11. "Freasdal Dè! an e a thuirt thu? Chan eil mi creidsinn ann an Dia, no ann am Freasdal no ann an Slànaighear, oir is nithe sin leis a bheil sluagh glic air am mealladh, agus sluagh ionraic air an dalladh, agus air an truailleadh. Uime sin, bidh falbh agus na cuir dragh orm".

12. Dh'fhalbh an duine boichd gu trom air a leònadh 'na spiorad, agus thuirt e ris a' cheàrd-umha, "Beannachd leat, agus gun dèanadh Dia tròcair air t-anam". Chrom e sìos air a ghlùinibh aig bun craoibh dlùth air an doras, agus chuir e suas an ùrnaigh seo, ag ràdh, "O! Dhè ghlòirmhoir, tha mi toirt buidheachais duit airson lìonmhorachd do chaoimhneas gràdhach, agus tha mi guidhe ort cuimhne a bhith agad air an duine thruagh seo, ged a rinn e tarcuis air do bhith agus do fhreasdal.

13. A Dhè, thoir maitheanas da, oir chan eil fios aige ciod a ta e ag ràdh no dèanamh".

14. Mar seo chaidh na clùisean rè tamaill seachad, ach bha na focail "A Dhè, thoir maitheanas da, oir chan eil fios aige ciod a ta e ag ràdh no dèanamh", a' fuaim gun sgur a là agus a dh'oidhche ann an cluasaibh an duine shaibhir, agus cha robh airgead no òr a' toirt suaimhneis da; oir bha e do ghnàth ann am mòr thrioblaid inntinn.
15. Deich làithean an dèidh sin dh'ullaich e a charbad chum gnothaichean a dhèanamh 'sa bhaile mhòr, agus ghabh e an t-slighe.
16. Mar mhile don bhaile rug e air an t-seann duine air an rathad mhòr, agus air da fhaicinn, chaidh e gu searbh air chrith.
17. Leum e sìos on charbad, agus rug e air làimh air an duine bhoichd gidheadh cha d'aithnich se e, ach thuirt e ris, "A dhuine bhoichd, tha mo chridhe brònach on uair a dhealaich thu rium agus rè na h-ùine o sin tha mi air mo chlaoidh le ciont agus eagal".
18. An-sin dh'fheòraich an duine boichd dheth, "Am fac mise riamh roimh thu, agus ma chunnaic, ciod a rinn mi ort, no 'nad aghaidh, chum gum buailteadh thu le ciont agus eagal?"
19. "Rinn thu nithe cudthromach d'am thaobh-sa airson am bi aoibhneas orm uile làithean mo bheatha".
20. Air do dh'Ionraic sin a chluinntinn, a deir e, "O cheann beagan làithean air ais, bha mi ocrach, agus ghairm mi aig doras duine saibhir. Air da m'fhaicinn bha corraich air, agus chuir e air falbh mi, ag innse dhomh nach robh e a' creidsinn aon chuid ann an Dia no 'na fhreasdal, agus chuir mi ùrnaigh suas ris an Ti Bheannaichte as a leth".
21. "Stad, stad, a charaid ionmhainn, is mise an duine! Is mise an creutair truagh sin a thuirt riut nach robh mi a' creidsinn ann an Dia; seadh, is mise am peacach gràineil ud nach tug aoidheachd dhuit, ach a ghreas air falbh thu!
22. Is mise a chual t-ùrnaigh-sa ris an Tighearna, ag ràdh, "A Dhè, thoir maitheanas da, oir chan eil fios aige ciod a ta e ag ràdh no dèanamh".
23. Chaidh na briathra sin mar shaighead gheur a-steach do m' chridhe, agus lot iad le cumhachd an Spioraid an cridhe cruaidh, cealgach sin.
24. Thig-sa a-steach maille rium don charbad, agus pillidh sinn dh'ionnsuidh mo thaigh-sa".
25. Thug an ceàrd-umha Ionraic MacAilein leis dhachaidh, agus cha do dhealaich e ris tuilleadh. Bha iad beò cuideachd rè àireimh bhliadhnaichean, agus mu dheireadh chuireadh sìnte taobh ri taobh iad 'san taigh chumhann sin a dh'òrdaicheadh do gach uile bheò.

SGIATHANACH

APPENDIX 3
SELECTED LETTERS
OF THE REV. ALEXANDER MACGREGOR

- I Letter to the Rev. Dr. McLeod, Glasgow (Clàr 268)
- II Letter to Captain Smith R. N., Portree, (Clàr 274)
- III Letter to Captain Smith R. N., Portree, (Clàr 275)

I

Manse of Kilmuir,
29th Dec. 1846.

Rev. Dear Sir,

I beg leave to address you on a subject which is in itself of the most vital importance, viz. the prevailing famine with which it has been the will of the Great Ruler of all things to afflict this quarter of the kingdom. The condition of this parish, in common with all other parishes around, is at present deplorably alarming. It is well known that the potatoes formed almost the sole staff of life to the population of this country. It is likewise well known that the unaccountable failure of that esculent has, for several months back, caused a famine over the length and breadth of our parishes. Unless relief had been afforded, many deaths would have taken place from actual want of food.

I may state that the population of this parish is at present about 4000 souls. Of these, upwards of 2000 have no lands from the proprietor. They had indeed small patches from the occupiers of lands, for planting potatoes; but from these patches they have, this year derived no benefit whatever, as the potatoes totally failed. These 2000 souls are now reduced to a state of abject famine, and have lived for the last four months solely on the bounty of the Proprietor, Lord Macdonald. On the other hand, nearly 2000 souls occupy crofts of land, but the returns from the same, in the shape of corn crops, will not be sufficient to afford them support for more than a month to come. In a short time, therefore, the whole population will become the victims of scarcity and famine.

It is but just to state, that Lord Macdonald has distinguished himself already for his liberality in support of the destitute. His Lordship has for the last two months expended at the average rate of about £9 a-day, for the support of the destitute in this single parish of Kilmuir, which sum of money exceeds the rental of this parish. Numbers are added daily to the lists of the destitute, and, as already stated, all the population will be in want some weeks hence.

While it cannot be expected that the Proprietor is able to continue for any length of time this liberality, it must be recollected that, should he do so, the whole rental of this parish would be inadequate to afford relief to more than one fourth of those who will be utterly destitute in a few weeks. The existing calamity *must*, from the nature of things, be of protracted duration, and wise measures ought consequently to be adopted, in the first place, to keep the population alive, and, in the second place,

to ameliorate their condition. I earnestly and humbly anticipate, that, while much will be done by public contributions, the Government of the country will not look with apathy on the fearful state of our distressed population at this moment. While such vast sums of money are awarded to Ireland, surely the equally necessitous condition of the peaceful, the loyal, and the deserving population of the Hebrides, *cannot*, and *will not*, be slighted by the public, and particularly by Government. The great forbearance and the submissive deportment of our Highlanders, ought surely to arrest favourable and immediate attention in their behalf. The present visitation of Providence is equally sudden as it is distressing. It is of an extraordinary nature, and requires an extraordinary remedy.

I may briefly mention what I humbly deem requisite for the present alarming emergency.

In the first place, the people must be kept alive by ample and regular supplies of food, which may be best in the shape of oat, barley, and Indian meal.

In the second place, the people ought to be supplied with the seed of oats, barley, and if possible, of potatoes. Unless every family be provided with less or more seed, it is a matter of certainty that next season must, if possible, be worse than the present season. Unless seed be procured, there can be no prospective comfort for the poor people, and the calamity must go on from year to year.

I would also humbly suggest an opinion, that no relief ought to be eleemosynary, except to such as are incapable of earning it by bodily labour. Even in regard to charitable contributions, let the able-bodied do something for their allowances, by which they will benefit themselves and their country, and by which, above all, they will preserve that spirit of independence for which the Highlanders have always been proverbial.

Trusting that these brief but hasty remarks may be of use,
I have the honour to be,

Rev. Dear Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

A. MacGregor

Rev. N. McLeod

II

Kilmuir Manse,
24 Feby. 1849

My dear Sir,

The deplorable state of destitution at present in this parish has caused a very great demand for relief, under the operation of your Committee. There is one circumstance connected with the present position of the population regarding which I take the liberty of making mention, in case that my good friend Captain Elliott may be disposed to effect a remedy. The season has now arrived for the cultivation of the port and I lament to find that many have no heart for the work, not knowing how to procure seed for sowing. On the other hand, most of the landless families were in the habit, in by gone seasons of raising some corn and potatoes on the half-foot system; - but this season two great obstacles stand in the way of this latter class deriving any benefit from this old system; viz.: the want of seed, - and of an opportunity of tilling the ground, their whole time being otherwise occupied by test-work.

As an example of this, I myself have offered a large piece of ground to the neighbouring cottars to be tilled in the system in question, and have also agreed to furnish the seed-corn, yet I am unable to get anyone to accept of my offer because the want of food urges them to adhere daily to the test-operations. If matters continue thus, these poor families can now sow nothing, and of course can reap nothing in harvest.

I would therefore humbly impress upon Captain Elliott and through him on the Highland Relief Committee the great propriety of offering the poor people every facility of saving as much as possible: - and I would be delighted to see that relief would be allotted to crofters for trenching, fencing and draining their land (under proper regulations) and that relief would be allowed to such as have no lands for road-working and such like works. The cultivation of the soil is the most important subject that can engage the Committee's attention. - Until that be resorted to here on a large and judicious scale, poverty will ever exist, if the population will ever be dependent and helpless. -

The plea that proprietors would be indirectly benefitted by the granting of Committee allowances of food for improving the soil, should not be held relevant. Even granting that to be the case, it is certain that the tenants would derive benefit from it; and what would be of advantage to them ought not to be withheld on the grounds that it might be construed as ultimately of advantage to proprietors, who in the Highlands generally are "sui generis" as far as the tenants themselves.

As I know not where Captain Elliott is at present, I hope that you will be kindly pleased to communicate with him on this very important subject. -

I remain

My dear Sir,

Your very obedient servant
Alexander MacGregor

Captain Smith R.N.
Portree

III

Kilmuir Manse
24th March 1849

My dear Sir,

I have received both your kind favours with their enclosures, and felt greatly obliged for the prompt manner in which you exerted yourself to secure supplies for my poor parishioners. I am particularly sorry that your contractor for this place should commit himself so rashly to paper in contradicting, if he could, the statement that all the supplies had been exhausted. The very day I lately left here for Portree, there was not a particle of meal in Nigg Commission or Stensholl (*sic*) - many of the poor people had to get allowances for a whole month, and were living by borrowing from their neighbours, grinding their seed-corn &. That such was the case, I beg leave to refer you to any sensible inhabitant of this quarter. I would be sorry to speak of anything tending to hurt the feelings of your meal contractor, or in any respect to injure him, as I am sure he is doing his best, - but after all if the supplies are withheld by stress of weather or other causes, it is not the most prudent course for him to dent what hundreds can substantiate, and particularly so, when our miserable population are the sufferers. I have just heard, however, that a small supply of meal has come to the place, which I trust will put everything right in the meantime. - It is a matter of most serious concern what is to become of the miserable population of this parish when your Committee's supplies will be exhausted. I believe it to be the poorest parish in the Hebrides, owing to the continued total failure of the potatoes in it, - the small divisions of land, and the excessive number in it of landless families. This fact may be seen from the present state of the tenants here compared with those in the neighbouring parish of Steinsholl. I hear that here between 40 and 50 tenants have just been warned by the proprietor for arrears of rent, whereas no tenant has been warned in Steinsholl; and it is well known that Lord McDonald is one of the most indulgent proprietors anywhere. I merely mention this circumstance to illustrate the comparative poverty of the two parishes.

With very kind regards for Mrs Smith and you,

I remain,

My dear Sir,

Yours very sincerely

Alexander MacGregor

Captain Smith R. N

APPENDIX 4

PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

excerpted from the writings of Alexander MacGregor

* = those **not** to be found in Alexander Nicolson's *Gaelic Proverbs*¹, to which Alexander MacGregor contributed some proverbs, as discussed in Chapter 9.

1. A' bogadh nan gad.

TH 17/10/1879

Steeping the withes (leaving).

See *Dwelly's Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary* p. 469.

2. A' dèanamh teadhair a roineig.

TH 17/10/1879.

Making a tether from hair.

Nicolson 169.9.

3. Aig deireadh an latha is maith na h-eòlaich.

TH 17/10/1879.

At the end of the day acquaintances are good.

Nicolson 28.6.

4. *Aig gach duine tha a luach fhèin.

An G. 21; 261.

Each man has his own worth.

5. *Aig gach nì tha tràth, agus àm aig gach rùn fuidh nèamh. Am gu gul, agus àm gu gàire; àm gu caoidh agus àm gu dannsadh.

An G. 32; 234.

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance.

Ecclesiastes iii, 1-4.

cf. Nicolson 354.6 Tha àm air an achmhasan a's tràth air a' chèilidh.

6. A lion beagan 's beagan mar a dh'ith an cat an sgadan.

TH 17/10/1879.

Little by little as the cat ate the herring.

Nicolson 5.1.

7. Am fear a bhios carach 'sa bhaile seo, bithidh e carach 'sa bhaile ud thall.

An G. 59; 326.

He who is deceitful at home will be deceitful in away from home.

Nicolson 11.7.

8. Am fear aig a bheil an t-ainm gu bhith 'g éirigh gu moch, gum feud e cadal a dhèanamh gu h-oidhche.

An G. 26; 53.

He who has a name for rising early may sleep until night.

Nicolson 14.2.

¹ Alexander Nicolson, *Gaelic Proverbs* (Edinburgh, 1881; rev. by Malcolm MacInnes, Glasgow, 1951).

9. Am fear a thèid don bhaile mhór gun ghnòthach, bheir e ghnòthach às.

An G. 25; 14.

He who goes to the town without business will bring business from it.

Alt. in Nicolson 17.6 Am fear a thèid don taigh mhór gun ghnòthach, bheir e ghnòthach às.

10. Am fear do'n dàn an donas, 's ann dà a bheanas.

TH 28/6/1873.

For whom ill is fated, him it strikes.

Nicolson 19.4.

11. An cron a bhitheas san aodunn cha'n fhaodar fholuchadh. *TH 26/10/1878.*

The fault that's in the face cannot be concealed.

Nicolson 28.2 An cron a bhitheas san aodunn cha'n fhaodar a chleith.

12.*An latha a mharbhas tu fiadh, agus an latha nach marbh. *An G. 29; 136.*

The day you kill a deer and the day you don't.

cf. *Campbell Collection* No. 73 An latha a mharbhas tu fiadh, 's an latha 'n diabhail gin, a toast from Mull.²

cf. Nicolson 30.3 An latha a chì 's nach fhaic.

13.*An nì nach eil 'sa cheann, chan aithrisear ach gu gann leis an teangaidh.

An G. 72; 361.

That which isn't in the head can scarcely be told by the tongue.

14.*An nì sin a thig dochaireach, gu dochaireach siubhlaidh e air falbh.

An G. 21; 261.

What comes uneasily will go away uneasily.

15. An nì sin a thig leis a' ghaoith, falbhaidh e leis an uisge. *An G. 21; 261.*

What comes with the wind will go with the rain.

Nicolson 32.9.

16. An rud a chuir an earb air an loch - èiginn.

An G. 25; 1874.

The thing which made the roe take to the loch - necessity.

Nicolson 34.5.

17.*An uair a dh'iarras caraid comain, chan eil a-màireach idir ann.

An G. 21; 1873.

When a friend asks a favour there is no tomorrow.

18. Bagair ach na buail.

TH 21/9/1878.

Threaten but do not strike.

Nicolson 47.1.

² Donald E. Meek ed., *The Campbell Collection of Gaelic Proverbs and Proverbial Sayings* (Inverness, 1978), p. 15.

- 19. Biodh gach fear a' toirt sgarbh a creig dha fhèin.** TH 17/10/1879.
 Let each man take his own shag from the cliff.
 Nicolson 67.7 and see also an anecdotal illustration of this St. Kilda proverb in Margaret Fay Shaw's *Folksong and Folklore of South Uist*.³
- 20.* Buaidh mhac agus laogh bhoirionn ort.** TH 3/8/1878.
 May you have sons and female calves.
- 21. Caillidh tu do charaid le bhith 'ga thadhal tuilleadh 's tric, agus tuilleadh 's ainneamh.** An G. 21; 261.
 You will lose your friend by visiting him too often and too rarely.
 cf. Nicolson 75.9 Call caraid taghal tric, 's call caraid taghal ainmig.
- 22. Car eile ann an adharc an daimh** TH 25/3/1878.
 Another twist in the ox's horn.
 Nicolson 355.6.
- 23. Ceannsaichidh gach fear an droch bhean, ach esan aig a bheil i.** An G. 28; 113.
 Every man can tame a bad wife except he who has her.
 Nicolson 78.8.
- 24. Cha bhreugnaichear an sean-fhacal.** TH 17/10/1879.
 The proverb will not be contradicted.
 cf. Nicolson 36.5 An sean-fhacail gu fad fìor, cha bhriagaichear an sean-fhacal.
- 25. Cha chreidear an fhìrinn o bheul nam breug.** TH 26/10/1878.
 The truth from a lying mouth will not be believed.
 Nicolson 90.5.
- 26. Cha d'fhuaras riamh saoi gun samhail.** An G. 71; 332.
 A hero was never found without a peer.
 cf. Nicolson 126.4 Cha robh saoidh gun choimeas.
 cf. Neil Sinclair's No. 68. Cha tàinig saoi gun a shamhail.⁴
- 27.*Cha d'rinn Theab riamh cron.** An G. 29; 137.
 'Almost' never did any harm.
 cf. Nicolson 99.3 Cha d'rinn Theab riamh sealg and 92.2 Cha deach Theab riamh le creig.
- 28.*Chan aithnichear na daoine bochda le 'n càirdibh ach nuair a chì iad fhéin iomchaidh.** An G. 21; 261.
 Poor people are only recognised by their friends when they themselves see fit.

³ Margaret Fay Shaw, *Folksong and Folklore of South Uist* (Aberdeen, 1986), p. 60.

⁴ John Lorne Campbell, 'Proverbs from Barra collected by the late Neil Sinclair' *SGS*, 10 Part ii (1965), pp. 178-208.

See *Reliquiae Celticae* vol. 2.⁵

Similar sentiments are expressed in the following proverbs, Nicolson 124.6 Cha robh caraid riamh aig duine bochd and 14.4 Am fear a ghleidheas a chuid gleidhidh e a chàirdean.

29. Cha 'n ann na h-uile la a bhios mod aig Mac an Toisich. *An G.* 31; 212.

It is not everyday that Macintosh holds a court.

Nicolson 105.10. Nicolson includes Macintosh's explanation that this has its origin in a regality court held by the Earl of Perth's chamberlain, Macintosh of Monyvaird. He had the reputation for sentencing one criminal to be hanged every court day.

30. Cha 'n iarrar an duine dona ach a dhìcheall. *TH* 6/7/1878.

A poor man can only do his best.

Nicolson 93.8

31.*Cha ghlacar na seann eòin le moll. *An G.* 21; 260.

Old birds won't be caught by chaff.

cf. Nicolson 89.4 Cha choileach a mhealladh a' moll mi 'I am not a cock to be caught with chaff'.

32. Cha mhair a' ghrian-mhaidne re an là. *TH* 26/10/1878.

The morning sun won't last all day.

Nicolson 383.11.

33.*Chan e an seòl air an glacar an t-eun, eagal a chur air. *An G.* 21; 260.

The way of catching the bird is not by frightening it.

34. Chan eil fios aig neach far am bheil a' bhròg a' gramachadh ach aige-san a tà 'ga caitheadh. *An G.* 21; 261.

No one knows where the shoe is grasping except he who is wearing it.

Cf. Nicolson 212.9 Is ann aig duine fhèin is fheàrr a tha fios càit am bheil a bhròg 'ga ghoirteachadh.

35.*Chan eil saibhreas r'a fhaotainn á faochagan falamh. *An G.* 72; 361.

Wealth isn't to be got from empty wheelks.

36. Chan fheàrr droch earbsadh na bhith falamh. *TH* 17/10/1879.

Misplaced trust is no better than no trust.

See **is miosa droch earbsa.**

⁵ A. MacBain and J. Kennedy eds, *Reliquiae Celticae* vols 1 & 2 (Inverness 1892-1894). Vol. 2, p. 478. Vol. 1 contains William MacMurchy's eighteenth century collection of proverbs, as referred to in Chapter 9. Vol. 2 contains a list of proverbs which, it states that the Rev. Dr. Alexander Cameron intended to supplement Nicolson's collection.

- 37.*Chan fheumar an t-each maith a sharachadh.** *An G.* 21; 262.
The good horse does not need to be oppressed.
cf. Nicolson 89.5 Cha chòir an t-each glan a chur h-uige.
- 38. Chan fhiosrach mar fhoighnich.** *An G.* 71; 333.
You won't know if you don't ask.
Nicolson 119.5.
- 39. Chan fhuiling an onoir clùd.** *An G.* 45; 265.
Honour will not suffer patching.
Nicolson 119.7.
- 40. Chan fhuirasd a' chromag a thoirt às an t-seann mhaide.** *An G.* 43; 210.
It's not easy to take the twist out of the old stick.
cf. Nicolson 26.4 An car a bhios 'san t-seann mhaide 's duilich a thort às.
- 41. Chan i a' bhò as àirde geum as fheàrr gu bainne.** *TH* 17/10/1879.
The loudest lowing cow is not the best for milk.
Nicolson 119.10.
- 42. Cha leig an leisg da deoin neach air slighe choir am feasd.** *TH* 21/9/1878.
If laziness but have its will, it keeps a man from virtue still.
Nicolson 103.1.
- 43. Cha soirbh seabhag a dhèanamh dhen chlamhan.** *An G.* 72; 361.
It's not easy to make a hawk of a kite.
Nicolson 95.5.
- 44. Cha tàinig call mòr gun bhuannachd bhig.** *TH* 17/10/1879.
Great loss never came without small gain.
Nicolson 124.4. Nicolson 94.10 Cha deanar buannachd gun chall, expresses the reverse.
- 45. Cha tig an còta glas cho maith do na h-uile fear.** *An G.* 28; 112.
The grey coat does not suit every man as well.
Nicolson 131.1.
- 46. Cha tig ubh mór á nead an dreathainn-duinn.** *An G.* 63; 72.
A large egg will not come from the nest of the wren.
Nicolson 99.12 Cha tàinig ubh mòr riamh bho'n dreathainn-duinn.
- 47. Cha truimeid a' chaor a falluing**
Cha truimeid an t-each an t-srian
Cha truimeid an loch an lach
'S cha truimeid a' cholainn ciall. *An G.* 55; 196.
Her clothing does not burden the sheep

The bridle does not burden the horse
The duck does not burden the loch
And sense does not burden the body.

cf. Nicolson 90.7.

Cha chudthrom air loch an lach,
Cha chudthrom air each a shrian,
Cha chudthrom air caor a h-olann
'S cha chudthrom air colann ciall.

This also to be found in Duncan Lothian's collection of proverbs in the form

Cha trom leis an loch an lach,
Cha trom leis an each an t-srian;
Cha trom leis a' chaor a h-olann,
'S cha truimide colann ciall.⁶

48.*Cho cinnteach ris an airgead bhaistidh.

An G. 31; 208.

As sure as christening silver.

In Margaret Bennett's *Scottish Customs from the Cradle to the Grave* one informant from Orkney says that to ensure good luck a child's first drink should be taken off silver.⁷

49. Cho eòlach 's a tha an ladar air a' phoit.

TH 2/5/1879.

As well acquainted as the ladle and the pot.

Nicolson 139.9.

**50. Chunnaic mi 'n t-seilcheag air an lic luim,
Chuala mi 'chubhag gun ghréim nam bhroinn,
Chunnaic mi 'n searrach 's a chulaobh rium,
A's dh'aithnich mi nach rachadh a' bhliadhna seo leam.**

An G. 20; 232.

I saw the snail on the bare flag stone

I heard the cuckoo while without food inside me

I saw the foal with its back to me

And I knew that that this year wouldn't go well for me.

Nicolson 144.3 Attributed to the 'Cailleach Bheurra'.

This is a well-known rhyme which is also to be found in Alexander MacDonald's *Story and Song from Loch Ness-Side* with only minor variations

Chual mi 'chuthag

Gun bhiadh na m' bhroinn;

Chunnaic mi 'n searrach

'S a chùl-thaobh rium;

Chunnaic mi 'n t-seilcheag

Air an leac luim;

'S dh'aithnich mi nach rachadh

A' bhliadhna leam.⁸

⁶ William J. Watson, *Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig: Specimens of Gaelic Poetry* (Stirling, 1918; 2nd edition 1932), p. 31.

⁷ Margaret Bennett, *Scottish Customs from the Cradle to the Grave* (Edinburgh, 1992), p. 20.

51. *Cluinnear an cagar cóig mìle air falbh. *An G. 21; 261.*
A whisper can be heard five miles away.

52. Coinnichidh na daoine, ged nach coinnich na cnuic. *An G. 20; 232.*
Men may meet but mountains never.
Nicolson 154.3. This is a metaphor for impossibility.

Coinnichidh na càirdean, nuair nach coinnich na cnuic. *An G. 66; 161.*

53. *. . . cosmhuil ris a' ghiullan Ileach a bha 'breabadh agus a' bualadh a bhroige ri creig, nuair a ghlaodh e gum ' bu mhiosa don chreig na dhi'. *An G. 31; 209.*

Like the Islay boy who was kicking and hitting his shoe against a rock, when he cried that it was worse for the rock than for it.

An article in the *Highlander* explains the origin of this proverb. A cobbler in Islay is asked by a child - a fairy changeling - to make him a pair of shoes and in exchange the child will play a tune on the pipes for him. When the child has fulfilled his part of the bargain, the cobbler asks how he is to make the shoes, he is told:

Brogan bileach, baileach, beul-dubh;

O dhruim leathar nam bo,

O shar leathar nan aighean;

Farra-bhuinn a' steach, gearra-bhuinn a' mach;

Buinn fhada, dhireach nan sineadh eatorra sin;

Built chiar-dhubh, dhonna o' chirein na droma,

Snathain caol reidh, guin gheur, tarruing air eigin,

Lamh deagh fhoghlum ga 'm fuaidheal,

Nach faiceadh am bonn an t'athar, no'n t-uachdar an talamh,

Buanas broig fir eilein, eireachdas broig mhiic rìgh,

'S ged 'bhuaileadh i air a' chreig,

Gu'm bu mhiosa do'n chreig na dhi.⁹

54. Dh'fhalbh Peairt. *An G. 66; 162.*

Perth is gone.

Nicolson 166.6 Dh'fhalbh Peairt, thuit an drochaid! Said of catastrophe.

55. Dh'fhuirich do mhàthair ri do bhreith, agus chan i bu lugha cabhag. *An G. 49; 14.*

Your mother waited for your birth and she wasn't in less of a hurry.

Nicolson 166.9 Dh'fhan do mhàthair ri do bhreith.

56. Faothachadh gille a' ghobhainn o na h-ùird gus na builg 's o na builg gus na h-ùird. *TH 17/10/1879.*

The relief of the smith's lad, from the hammers to the bellows and from the bellows to the hammers.

⁸ Alexander MacDonald, *Story and Song from Loch Ness-Side* (Inverness, 1914), p. 173.

⁹ Lochunn Piobaire, 'An Leanabh Ileach 's na Brogan', *TH*, 1 April 1876, p. 3.

This a longer form of that in Nicolson 178.6, Faothachadh gille a' ghobhainn o na h-ùird gus na builg.

57. *Far nach dèan a h-aon, nach urrainn dithis aimhreite a thogail.

An G. 21; 261.

Where *one* won't *two* can make a quarrel.

58. *Far nach eil meas air an fhearann, cha bhi fothrais (sic, forfhais?) mu na crìochan.

TH 26/10/1878.

Where the land is not respected, there will be no inquiry about the boundaries.

59. Fear dubh dana, fear bàn bleideil, fear donn dualaidh, 's fear ruadh sgeigeil.

TH 17/10/1879.

Black man bold, fair man impertinent, a brown man curly and a red man scornful.

Nicolson 182.9.

60. Fear 'sa bhaile, 's aire às, is fèarr às no ann e.

An G. 52; 105.

A man at home and his attention elsewhere, better away than there.

Nicolson 182.4.

61. *Feumaidh esan spàin fhada a bhith aige a tha 'cur roimhe a shuipeir a ghabhail maille ris an Droch-fhear.

An G. 21; 260.

He who intends to dine with the Devil needs a long spoon.

cf. Scots, Wha sups wi the Deil maun sup wi a lang spune.

62. *Freagraidh an cù fead.

An G. 21; 261.

The dog answers a whistle.

63. Gach dileas gu deireadh

TH 16/5/1873.

The faithful (best-loved) last.

Nicolson 189.3.

64. Gheibh baobh a guidhe far nach fhaigh a h-anam trocair.

TH 17/10/1879.

A wicked woman will get her wish where her soul gets no mercy.

Nicolson 202.9.

65. Gheibh foighidinn furtachd.

TH 17/10/1879.

Patience will get help.

Nicolson 203.5.

66. *Ginidh subhailc maise, ach ginidh dubhailc duaichneachd. Sinidh subhailc a mach beatha an duine ach greasaidh dubhailc e gu bàs.

TH 14/2/1879.

Virtue begets beauty, but vice begets ugliness. Virtue will prolong man's life, but vice will drive him to death.

- 67. *Is airidh an t-oibriche air a lon, agus feumar gach beo a bheathachadh.** TH 17/10/1879.
The worker deserves his food and each living person needs to be fed.
- 68. Is buidhe le bochd beagan.** An G. 72; 361.
A poor man is glad of a little.
Nicolson 221.8.
- 69. Is cliùitiche an onoir na 'n t-òr.** An G. 45; 265.
Honour is nobler than gold.
Nicolson 222.8.
- 70. *Is cruaidh a bhith 'breabadh an aghaidh nan dealg.** An G. 31; 209.
It's hard to be kicking against thorns.
- 71. Is dàn misneachail an coileach air a dhùnan fhéin.** An G. 29; 140.
Is dana coileach air oiraich féin. TH 6/7/1878.
Is dana cù air oiraich féin. TH 6/7/1878.
Nicolson 225.11.
A cockerel is bold and brave on his own dung-hill.
A cockerel / dog is bold on its own dung-hill.
- 72. Is e 'm buileachadh nì 'n cruinneachadh**
'Se 'n cruinneachadh nì 'n sguaban
Na sguaban nì na muilleana,
'S na muilleana na cruachan. An G. 72; 361.
It's the management which makes the gathering
It's the gathering which makes the sheaves
The sheaves make the trusses
And the trusses the stacks.
Nicolson 392.6.
- 73. *Is e 'n dara buille a nì an tuasaid.** An G. 21; 261.
It's the second blow that makes the brawl.
- 74. *Is e an t-earchall a's miosa a bhith eu-comasach air earchall a ghiùlan.** TH 14/2/1879.
The worst misfortune is to be incapable of enduring misfortune.
'Earchall' can be translated more specifically as 'cattle-loss'.
- 75. *Is deireadh gach comuinn dealachadh.** TH 6/7/1878.
The end of each company is parting.
- 76. * Is e an t-eun trath a ghlacas an daolag.** TH 14/8/1875.
The early bird catches the beetle (*alt.* worm). (English)

- 77. *Is e Ionracas a' chrionnachd as fheàrr.** *An. G. 21; 260.*
 Righteousness is the best caution.
- 78. *Is e màthair an deagh fhortain, Dìcheall.** *An G. 21; 260.*
 Diligence is the source of good fortune.
- 79. Is feàrr an t-olc eòlach, na 'n t-olc aineolach.** *An G. 52; 105.*
 The known evil is better than the unknown.
 Nicolson 241.9. English - Better the devil you know
- 80. Is feàrr làn an dùirn de cheàird, na làn an dùirn de'n òr.** *TH 20/10/1878.*
 A handful of trade is better than a handful of gold.
 Nicolson 247.10.
- 81. Is fheàrr teachd aig deireadh na cuirme na aig toiseach na tuasaid.** *TH 17/10/1879.*
 Better to come at the end of a feast than at the beginning of a brawl.
 Nicolson 245.4.
- 82. *Is goirt a phiocas a' mhial ocrach.** *An G. 21; 261.*
 It's painfully that the hungry louse nibbles.
 cf. Scots A hungry louse nibbles sair.¹⁰
- 83. Is i a' bhó as miosa a tha 'sa bhuaile, as àirde geum.** *An G. 33; 274.*
 The worst cow in the field is the one which lows loudest.
 Nicolson 2.1 and cf 119.10, Chan i bhò 's àirde géum a's mò bainne.
- 84. Is iomadh rud a chith an duine a bhios fada beo.** *An G. 50; 44.*
 He who lives long will see many things.
 Nicolson 16.3 Am fear a's fhaide saoghal 's e 's mò a chì.
- 85. *Is lom taigh gun bhunait.** *An G. 31; 210.*
 Bare is the house without foundation.
- 86. Is luaithe deoch na sgeul.** *An G. 31; 207.*
 A drink is quicker than a story.
 Nicolson 263.10.
- 87. Is maith an naigheachd a bhi gun naigheachd.** *An G. 55; 196.*
 No news is good news. (English)
 Nicolson 273.2

¹⁰ James Donald ed., *Scottish Proverbs collected and arranged by Andrew Henderson* (Glasgow, 1881), p. 3

88. Is maith nach eil iuchraichean an domhain fo chrìos na h-aoin mhnà.

An G. 72; 361.

It's good that the keys of the world are not on the belt of one woman.

Nicolson 275.8.

This echoes descriptions given of the ancient corn-dance 'Cailleach an Dùdain' in which the 'cailleach' has a large bunch of keys which jingle as she dances. The Rev. Dr. Norman MacLeod, for example, describes 'té a thàinig a stigh fo éideadh cailliche làidir tighe, le 'h-iuchraichean a' gliongarsaich air a crìos agus fire, faire! 'n a coslas.¹¹

89. Is milis corrag theth, ach ged is milis cha mhaith.

An G. 21; 261.

Sweet is a hot finger, but although it's sweet it's not good.

Nicolson 276.2.

90. Is minic a fhuair fear na h-eadairginn dorn.

An G. 21; 261.

Often was the interposer struck.

Nicolson 278.1 and 65.2.

91. Is minic a thuislicheas an t-each ceithir-chosach.

TH 13/10/1877.

Often does the four-legged horse stumble.

Nicolson 374.5 Tuislichidh an t-each ceithir-chosach.

92. Is miosa an t-eagal na an teagmhail.

TH 17/10/1879.

Fear is worse than strife.

cf. Nicolson 279.3 Is miosa an t-eagal na 'n cogadh.

93. Is miosa droch earbsadh na bhith falamh.

TH 6/7/1878.

Misplaced trust is worse than no trust.

cf Nicolson 279.7.

94. *Is miosa Uaisle gun chumhachd, na fìor Bhochdainn fhollaiseach.

An G. 21; 260.

Nobility without power is worse than true poverty which is obvious.

95. Is mise 'bha thall 's a chunnaic.

An G. 31; 212.

It's I who was over and saw it.

Nicolson 280.2. He gives the second part - 's a thàinig a nall 's a dh'innis e.

96. Is og an nollaig a' cheud oidhche.

An G. 32; 234.

Christmas is young the first night.

Nicolson 283.2. Possibly because it lasts twelve days?

97. *Is rag an duine nach gabh comhairle.

An G. 69; 265.

Obstinate is he who will not take advice.

¹¹ Rev. A. Clerk ed., *Caraid nan Gaidheal* p. 398. For further discussion of this dance, see Ragnall MacilleDhuibh 'Cailleach an Dùdain, key to the year?' *West Highland Free Press*, 21 September 1990.

98. Is trian oibre toiseachadh.

An G. 32; 236.

A third of the work is beginning.

Nicolson 225.7.

99. *Is truagh an taigh far an goir a' chearc nas treise na 'n coileach.

An G. 21; 261.

Sad is the house where the hen cries louder than the cock.

cf. Nicolson 149.5 Cìrean a' choillich air a' chirc 'The woman wearing the breeks'.

100. Leig an t-earball leis a' chraicinn.

TH 17/10/1879.

Let the tail go with the hide.

Nicolson 300.1.

101. Ma bhuaileas tu cù no balach, buail gu math iad.

TH 17/10/1879.

If you strike a boy or dog, strike them well.

Nicolson 303.5.

102. *Ma chreideas tu na chluinneas tu, feudaidh tu na chù thu ithe.

TH 17/10/1879.

If you believe what you hear you will eat what you see.

103.* Mar a bha am baile ann am Baideanach, an eatorras.

An G. 51; 71.

Like the village in Badenoch, middling.

Campbell Collection explains that the place referred to is Eadaras, or Etteridge in English.¹²

104. Mar a chaitheas duine a bheatha féin, ceart mar sin bheir e breith air a' choimhearsnach.

TH 26/10/1878.

As a man leads his own life, so may he judge his neighbour.

Nicolson 310.5 and *Reliquiae Celticae* Vol. II.¹³

105.* Mar a thubhairt an fhionnag ghlas m'a casan, 'is maith le cheile iad'.

TH 29.8.1874

As the hoodie crow said of its feet, 'they make a good pair'.

106. *Mar bhoil chaoil a' triall gu 'teach

Thig feasgar earraich air gach neach;

Ach mar chloich a' ruith le gleann

Thig feasgar fionn foghair.

TH 6/7/1878.

Like a thin cow going home

Spring evening comes to everyone

But like a stone rolling down the glen

Comes the cool autumn evening.

¹² *Campbell Collection* p. 160.

¹³ p. 494.

This is a another common seasonal saying. Cf. Nicolson 313.2 *Mar mhart caol a' tighinn gu baile, tha cabhanach na maidne Earraich*. Like a lean cow coming to a farm, is the dawn of a Spring morning. Lines 3 and 4 are to be found in *Reliquiae Celticae*, but with 'fann' in place of MacGregor's 'fionn'.¹⁴

107. Mar dhobhrain a'm buin uisge

Mar sheabhag gu eun sléibhe

Mar chù gu cat, 's mar chat gu luch

Tha bean mic gu màthair-chéile.

An G. 72; 361.

Like otter diving into water

Like a hawk to mountain bird

Like dog to cat and cat to mouse

Is a son's wife to her mother-in-law.

Nicolson 312.2.

108. Miann bà braon, miann caora teas;

Miann gaibhre gaoth, 'sa bhith 'n aodainn creig.

An G. 72; 361.

A cow's desire a shower, a sheep's desire heat

A goat's desire wind and to be on the rock face.

This is the second half of the verse contained in Nicolson 315.3, the first half being *Miann mnà mac, miann fear feachd, miann eich aonach, miann coin sneachd*. A woman's desire a son, a man's desire a host, a horse's desire a heath, a dog's desire snow.

109.*Millidh tuilleadh 's chòir do chogairibh am brot.

TH 10/10/1874.

Too many cooks spoil the broth. (English)

110.*Mura cladhaich thu às an talamh am bun, fàsaidh am feur.

An G. 21; 261.

Unless you dig the root out of the ground the grass will grow.

111. Na falbh Diluain

'S na gluais Dimàirt

Tha Diciadaoin craobhach

Is tha Diardaoin dìleach

Dihaoine chan eil e buadhail,

'S cha dhual dhut falbh a-màireach!

TH 17/10/1879.

Do not go on Monday

And do not move on Tuesday

Wednesday is dicey

And Thursday is rainy

Friday is not fortunate

And it is not right for you to go tomorrow!

¹⁴ p. 502.

Nicolson 324.9 has this with two differences, *craobhaidh* for *craobhach* and *dàlach* (dilatory) for *dileach*. Also to be found in *Reliquiae Celticae* vol. 2 and *Story and Song from Loch Ness-Side*.¹⁵

112.*Na gabh gnothach rinn, mur ionmhainn leat sinn. TH 17/10/1879.
Do not have anything to do with us unless you are fond of us.

113.*Na iarr comhrag, ach na h-ob i. TH 26/10/1878.
Seek not a fight, but avoid it not.
Also *Reliquiae Celticae*.¹⁶

114.Na ith 's na h-ob cuid an leinibh bhig. TH 26/10/1878.
Neither eat nor refuse the child's portion.
Nicolson 326.2.

115.*Na ob 's na iarr onoir. TH 26/10/1878.
Neither avoid nor seek honour.
Reliquiae Celticae.¹⁷

116. Na tog sinn gus an tuit sinn. TH 17/10/1879.
Do not lift us until we fall.
Nicolson 331.3.

117. Nì na big mar a chì na big. An G. 72; 361.
Little ones do as little ones see.
See Nicolson 32.3.

118. *Nì na h-uisgeacha tana am barrachd fuaim. An G. 21; 261.
Shallow waters make the more noise.

119. Nuair a théid bior 'san losgann nì e sgreach. An G. 21; 261.
When a toad is pierced he will screech.
Nicolson 43.1.

120.*Nuair a thig bochdainn a-staigh air an doras, grad theichidh gràdh a-mach air an uinneig. An G. 21; 261.
When poverty comes in the door, love will quickly flee out the window.
See *Reliquiae Celticae*.¹⁸

¹⁵ pp. 489-90; *Story and Song* p. 172. For discussion of sayings and beliefs associated with days of the week, including this particular rhyme, see Ragnall MacilleDhuibh 'We Die Every Day', *West Highland Free Press*, 5 April 1991.

¹⁶ p. 503.

¹⁷ p. 503.

¹⁸ p. 479.

121. Ruigidh ro ghiullachd air an ro ghalar. *An G.* 45; 264.

The best of nursing may overcome the worst disease.

Nicolson 341.8.

122. Ruigidh dàil doras.

TH 17/10/1879.

Delay will arrive at a door.

Nicolson 341.9. An explanation of this proverb is to be found in *Tocher* in a selection of proverbs recorded from Nan MacKinnon in 1960, transcribed and translated by John MacInnes.¹⁹ Dàil, as well as meaning delay means a delay in paying i.e. credit, and so this may be taken to mean that debts have to be paid eventually.

123.*Satan a' greasadh a chuid muc gu droch mhargadh. *An G.* 21; 261.

Satan driving his pigs to a bad market.

cf. Scots The deil aye drives his hogs to an ill market.²⁰

124. Seachain an t-slat, agus mill do leanabh. *An G.* 21; 261.

Spare the rod and spoil the child.

cf. Nicolson 192.9 and the Book of Proverbs xiii.24 Ge b'e chaomhnas an t-slat, is beag air a mhac.

125. Taigh gun chù, gun chat, gun leanabh bheag, - taigh gun ghean gun ghàire.

An G. 72; 362.

A house without dog, without cat, without child, - a house without cheerfulness, without laughter.

Nicolson 369.7.

126.*Teagaisgidh cleachd agus fhéin-fhiosrachadh na h-amadain.

An G. 28; 114.

Practice and experience will teach even fools.

127. Tha adhaircean mór air a' chrodh a tà fad as. *An G.* 52; 105.

The far off cows have long horns.

Nicolson 63.5.

128. Tha dà thaobh air a' Mhaoil. *An G.* 29; 138.

There are two sides to the headland.

Nicolson 356.6. In *Campbell Collection*, No. 843, The dà thaobh air a' Mhaoil agus seachd seallaidhean dhith.

129.*Tha gride nan sinnsear anns an t-sliochd. *An G.* 28; 113.

The quality of the ancestors is in the offspring.

¹⁹ *Tocher* 1 (1971-72), pp. 206-07.

²⁰ See Donald, p. 12.

130.*Tha teangadh amadain fada gu leòir chum a sgòrnan a ghearradh.

An G. 21; 260.

A fool's tongue is long enough to cut his throat.

cf. Nicolson 325.3 Na gearr do sgòrnan le d' theanga fhèin, Do not cut your throat with your own tongue.

131. Thèid cuilean ri dualchas.

TH 17/10/1879.

A puppy takes after its bloodline.

Nicolson 364.12.

132.*Theid cleachd' thar neart

FT XVII; 522

Practice prevails over strength

133. Thigeamaid beò an dòchas ro mhaith.

An G. 34; 302.

Let us live in good hope.

This is to be found in the penultimate stanza in Donnchadh Bàn's *Oran Seachran Seilge*:

Bidh sinn beò an dòchas ra-mhath

Gum bi chùis na 's fheàrr an t-ath-là,

Gum bi gaoth is grian is talamh

Mar as math leinn air na sléibhtibh.²¹

cf. Neil Sinclair's No. 73 Cho fhad 's a bhios an deò, bidh an dòchas.²²

134. Thig ri uair nach tig ri aimsir

Thig ri latha nach tig ri linn.

An G. 71; 333.

There will come in an hour what will not come in a season

There will come in a day what will not come in a century.

cf. Nicolson 376.3 Thig ri latha nach tig ri linn.

135.*Thoir guth math agus cead coise dhuinn.

TH 17/10/1879.

Give us a good word and permission to leave.

136. Trì aois coin, aois eich,

Trì aois eich, aois duine,

Trì aois duine, aois féidh,

Trì aois féidh, aois fir-ein,

Trì aois fir-ein, aois craobh-dharaich.

An G. 20; 234.

Thrice dog's age, age of horse

Thrice horse's age, age of man,

Thrice man's age, age of deer

Thrice deer's age, age of eagle

Thrice eagle's age, age of oak.

Nicolson 371.10.

²¹ Angus MacLeod (ed.), *The Songs of Duncan Bàn Macintyre* (Edinburgh, 1952), pp. 156-58 (p. 158).

²² John Lorne Campbell, p. 187.

APPENDIX 5

Elegy for the Rev. Alexander MacGregor

by Màiri Mhór nan Oran (Màiri Nic a' Phearsain)

Marbhrann

do'n Urramach Alastair Mac-Griogair

Na'm faighinn ciall leis an taghainn briathran,
Gu 'n cuirinn sios dhuibh iad ann an dàn,
Mu'n teachdair' fhiachail tha nis air triall uainn,
Gu tìr na diochuimhn' le àithn' a bhàis.
'S ann oidhche Chiadaoin a bhàrc an t-sian oirnn
Nach tiormaich grian duinn rè iomadh là,
'S gu bheil na ciadan 'san Eilean Sgiathach
Tha 'n diugh ga d' iarguin - 's ann daibh nach nàr.

'S ann doibh nach nàrach am basan fhàsgadh,
'S na deòir a theàrnadh fo rasg an sùil,
'S a liuthad ceàrnaidh 's na sheas thu 'n àite,
Bho'n là a dh'fhàg thu iad air do chùl;
Le d' ghnìomh 's le d' chànain, le ciall is gràidh dhaibh,
Nach gabhadh àireamh gu bràth dha'n taobh,
'S fhad 's a bhios tuinn a' bualadh ri chreagan uamhraidh,
Bidh t'ainm ga luaidh ann le uaill is mùirn.

Cha'n ann air tuairmse tha sinne luaidh ort,
Ge'd tha sinn gruamach air son do bhàis,
Tha thus' aig suaimhneas, taobh thall gach truaighe
'S gach saighead fhuar bho luchd-fuath do ghràdh.
Gur tric a chuala mi, le mo chluasan,
Bho bhèul nan uaibhreach nach d'fhuair an gràs,
An teanga ghruamach, toirt béum 'san uaigneas
Air son do thruais ris gach truaghan bàth.

Ach bu tusa an Criosduidh 'bha suilbhear, iasgaidh,
Cha b'ann le diadhachd gun dad dheth bhlàth;
Do chridhe tiorail, 's do làmh cho fialaidh,
'S cha'n fhacas riamh ort ach fiamh a ghair'.
Gur iomadh dùil 'bhios an cridhe brùite,
'Nuair théid an ùir air an t-sùil bu bhlàth,
'S cha chum a chùdainn na theid a shrùladh
Do dheòir ga d' ionndrann - 's ann daibh nach nàr.

Cha'n ioghnadh nàire 'bhi air cuid dheth d' bhràithrean,
Is tric thug sàth dhuit le teanga lóm,
Nach seasadh t'àite le neach fo àmhghar,

Ged dh'fhàgadh àithn aca leis a' Cheann;
 'Nuair chaidh mise chàradh air sgeir gu'm bhàthadh,
 Le truaghan Bàillidh, gun ghràdh na chóm;
 Chuir thusa bàta, le sgioba 's ràimh dhomh,
 'Nuair dh'fhàg a phàirt ud mi bhàn sa' pholl.

Màiri Nic a' Phearsoin, *Dàin agus Orain* (Inverness, 1891), pp.156-57.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Church Records (Scottish Record Office)

Minutes of the Presbytery of Skye. CH2/330

Minutes of the Presbytery of Edinburgh. CH2/121

Minutes of the Presbytery of Inverness. CH2/553

Minutes of the Kirk Session of the Gaelic Chapel (St. Oran's), Edinburgh. CH2/766

Papers on Highland Destitution (Scottish Record Office)

Letters to W. F. Skene, Secretary of Edinburgh Section of Highland Relief Board and related papers. HD12/21

Correspondence of Captain Smith (Skye). HD14/21

Official letter book no. 1 1846-7. HD 3/1

MacGregor of MacGregor Papers (Central Regional Archive)

Correspondence. Bundle 194.

National Library of Scotland

Archives of Messrs W. and R. Chambers, Publishers, Edinburgh.

Blackwood Papers

Parliamentary Papers

Report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Condition of the Population of the Islands and Highlands of Scotland, and into the Practicability of affording the People Relief by means of Emigration. 1841 VI.

Correspondence from July 1846 to February 1847, relating to the Measures adopted for the Relief of the Distress in Scotland. 1847 LIII

Report on the State of Education in the Hebrides by Alexander Nicolson. 1867 XXV

Periodicals and Newspapers

Celtic Magazine

Chambers' Edinburgh Journal

Cuairtear nan Gleann

Fear-Tathaich nam Beann

An Gaidheal

Glasgow Herald

Highlander

Inverness Advertiser

Northern Chronicle

Proceedings of the Society of Antiquities of Scotland

Quarterly Journal of Agriculture

An Teachdaire Gaelach

West Highland Free Press

Books and articles

- Anderson, Peter John ed. *Officers and Graduates of University and Kings College, Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1893).
- Banks, Mrs Mary Macleod *British Calendar Customs: Scotland* vol. 3 (London, 1941).
- The Holy Bible*
- Burt, Edward *Burt's Letters from the North of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1974).
- Campbell, Duncan *Reminiscences and Reflections of an Octogenarian Highlander* (Inverness, 1910).
- Campbell, Duncan *The Lairds of Glenlyon* (Strathtay, 1984).
- Campbell, J. F. *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* Vols 1-4 (Edinburgh, 1860, repr. in 2 vols Edinburgh, 1994).
- Campbell, John Gregorson *Clan Traditions and Popular Tales of the Western Highlands and Islands* (London, 1895).
- Carmichael, Alexander *Carmina Gadelica* Vols 1-6 Edinburgh, 1900 *et seq.*
- Clerk, Rev. A. ed. *Caraid nan Gaidheal* (Edinburgh, 1899).
- Conall, Donnchadh M. *Reul-Eolas: anns am bheil Cunntas air Cuspairibh An Rian-Ghreine agus Fath-Sgriobhadh, 's am bheil Gearr-shealladh air na Reultaibh Suidhichte* (Edinburgh, 1856).
- Domhnallach, Eoin *Searmoin* (Inverness, 1832).
- Duff, D. *Queen Victoria's Highland Journals* (Exeter, 1980).
- Fontane, Theodore *Across the Tweed* (London, 1965).
- Grant, Mrs Anne of Laggan *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland* (London, 1811).
- Grant, Elizabeth *Memoirs of a Highland Lady* (London, 1911).
- Highland Society of Scotland's Report on Ossian* (Edinburgh, 1805).
- Inverness Directory for 1855-56* (Inverness, 1855).
- Johnson, Samuel & Boswell, James *A Journey to the Hebrides* (Edinburgh, 1996).
- Kennedy, John *The Apostle of the North*, (2nd edition; Inverness, 1886).
- MacDiarmid, Eobhann *Searmona* (Edinburgh, 1804).
- MacDhughail, Rob *Ceann-iùil an fhir-imrich* (Glasgow, 1841).
- MacGhriogair, Iain *Orain Ghaelach* (Edinburgh, 1801).
- MacGregor, John *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America* (London, 1828).
- MacGregor, John *Observations on emigration to British America* (London, 1829).
- MacKenzie, Alexander 'The Rev. Alexander MacGregor, M.A.' *CM*, 74 (1881), 92-99.
- MacLeod, Rev. Donald *Memoir of Norman MacLeod D.D.* (London, 1876).
- McLeod, Donald *Gloomy Memories in the Highlands of Scotland versus Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe's Sunny Memories in (England) a Foreign Land* (Glasgow, 1892).

- MacLeod, Norman *Extracts from letters to the Rev. Dr. M'Leod, Glasgow, regarding the famine and destitution in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1847).
- MacLeod, Rev. Norman *The Home School or Hints on Home Education* 4th edition, (Edinburgh, 1856).
- Napier, James *Folklore: or Superstitious Beliefs in the West of Scotland* (Paisley 1879).
- New Statistical Account of Scotland* 15 vols (Edinburgh, 1835-45).
- Alexander Nicolson *Gaelic Proverbs* (Edinburgh, 1881; rev. by Malcolm MacInnes, Glasgow, 1951).
- Pichot, Amedée *Historical and Literary Tour of a Foreigner in England and Scotland* (London, 1825).
- The Post-Office Edinburgh and Leith Directory 1851-1852*
- Sage, Rev. Donald *Memorabilia Domestica or Parish Life in the North of Scotland* (Wick, 1889).
- Scott, Hew, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, 8 vols (Edinburgh, 1926).
- Smiles, Samuel *Self-Help* reprinted London, 1910.
- Somers, Robert *Letters from the Highlands on the Famine of 1846* (Inverness, 1977).
- Statistical Account of Scotland* 21 vols (Edinburgh, 1791-1799).
- Stewart, Rev. Alexander *Nether Lochaber: the Natural History, Legends and Folklore of the West Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1883).
- Stewart, Rev. Alexander *'Twixt Ben Nevis and Glencoe* (Edinburgh, 1885).
- Stewart, Alexander *History of a Highland Parish* (Glasgow, 1928).
- Stewart, Major-General David of Garth *Sketches of the Character, Institutions, and Customs of the Highlanders of Scotland* (2nd ed. Inverness, 1885).
- Who Was Who* Vol. 4 1941-1950 (London, 1980).

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Aarne, A. & Thompson, S. *The Types of the Folktale* (Helsinki, 1964).
- Adams, Frank Dawson *The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences* (London, 1938).
- Adams, Ian & Somerville, Meredyth *Cargoes of Despair and Hope: Scottish Emigration to North America 1603-1803* (Edinburgh, 1993).
- Anderson, P. J. *Ewen MacLachlan* (Aberdeen, 1918; reprinted from *Aberdeen University Bulletin*, 3, 643-72).
- Altick, Richard D. *Victorian People and Ideas* (London, 1973).
- Bennett, Margaret *Scottish Customs from the Cradle to the Grave* (Edinburgh, 1992).
- Biographies of Highland Clergymen* (Inverness, 1889).
- Black, Eugene C. *Victorian Culture and Society* (London, 1973).
- Black, Ronald 'Colla Ciotach', *TGSI*, 48 (1972-74), 201-43.
- Black, Ronald 'James Macintyre's Calendar', *SGS*, 17 (1996), 36-60.

- Blackie, John Stuart *The Language and Literature of the Scottish Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1876).
- Blakey, Ronald S. *The Man in the Manse* Edinburgh, 1978.
- Bowler, Peter J. *Charles Darwin* Oxford, 1990.
- Butler, Antoinette 'An Outline of Scottish Gaelic Drama before 1945' (unpublished MLitt. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1994).
- Cameron, Nigel M. de S. ed. *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993).
- Campbell, John Lorne *Gaelic in Scottish Education and Life. Past, Present and Future* (Edinburgh, 1945).
- Campbell, John Lorne *Told by the Cuddy* (Edinburgh, 1959).
- Campbell, John Lorne 'Proverbs from Barra collected by the late Neil Sinclair' *SGS* 10 Part 2 (1965), 178-208.
- Campbell, John Lorne *Hebridean Folksongs* (Oxford, 1969).
- Campbell, John Lorne 'Notes on Hamish Robertson's 'Studies in Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*'" *SGS*, 13 Part I (1978), 1-15.
- Campbell, John Lorne *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh, 1984).
- Checkland, Olive and Sydney *Industry and Ethos, Scotland 1832-1914* (Edinburgh, 1984).
- Clancy, Thomas Owen 'Saint and Fool: the image and function of Cummine Fota and Comgán Mac Da Cherda in early Irish literature' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1991).
- Collins, Victor *A Catalogue of all the publications of the late Prince Louis-Lucien Bonaparte to aid in the comparative study of European languages* (Paris, 1902).
- Collinson, Francis *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland* (London, 1966).
- Cooper, Derek *Road to the Isles* (Glasgow, 1979).
- Coupland, Sir Reginald *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London, 1964).
- Davie, George E. *The Democratic Intellect* (Edinburgh, 1961).
- Davis, Deborah 'Contexts of Ambivalence: the Folkloristic Activities of Nineteenth Century Scottish Highland Ministers', *Folklore*, 103 (1992), 207-21.
- Davis, Fred *Yearning for Yesterday. A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York, 1979).
- Devine, T. M. *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1988).
- Devine, Tom *Clanship to Crofters' War: The Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands* (Manchester, 1994).
- Diack, Alison 'Gaelic vernacular verse from the parish of Glenmuick, Tulloch and Glengairn' *Scottish Language*, 14/15 (1995-96), 234-50.

- Donald, James *Scottish Proverbs Collected and Arranged by Andrew Henderson* (Glasgow, 1881).
- Donaldson, William *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland: Language, Fiction and the Press* (Aberdeen, 1986).
- Dorson, Richard M. *The British Folklorists* (London, 1968).
- Drescher, Seymour 'Cart Whip and Billy Roller: Antislavery and Reform Symbolism in Industrializing Britain' *Journal of Social History*, 15 No. 1 (1981), 3-24.
- Drescher, Seymour *Capitalism and Antislavery. British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (Basingstoke, 1986).
- Durant, John ed. *Darwinism and Divinity* (Oxford, 1985).
- Durkacz, Victor Edward *The Decline of the Celtic Languages* (Edinburgh, 1983).
- Ellegard, Alvar *Darwin and the General Reader* (Göteborg, 1958).
- Ferguson, Mary & Matheson, Ann *Scottish Gaelic Union Catalogue* (Edinburgh, 1984).
- Fraser, Helen with Daniel Brown *English Prose of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1997).
- Fulton, William *Nature and God* (Edinburgh, 1927).
- Gifford, Douglas ed. *The History of Scottish Literature* vol 3 (Aberdeen, 1988).
- Gillies, Donald *The Life and Work of the Very Reverend Roderick MacLeod of Snizort, Skye* (n.d).
- Gillies, William 'A Century of Gaelic scholarship', in *Gaelic and Scotland* ed. by William Gillies, (Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 3-21.
- Gillies, William 'Gaelic Songs of the 'Forty-Five', *SS*, 30 (1991), 19-58.
- Glass, D. V. ed. *Introduction to Malthus* (London, 1953).
- Grant, I. F. *The MacLeods: The History of a Clan 1200-1956* (London, 1959).
- Grant, James Shaw *A Shilling for your Scowl* (Stornoway, 1992).
- Hechtner, Michael *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536-1966* (London, 1975).
- Hewison, Robert *The Heritage Industry. Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London, 1987).
- Houghton, Walter E. *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870* (Yale, 1957).
- Hunter, James *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976).
- Hunter, James *For the People's Cause from the writings of John Murdoch* (Edinburgh, 1986).
- Hunter, James *On the Other Side of Sorrow* (Edinburgh, 1995).
- Hunter, James *Glencoe and the Indians* (Edinburgh, 1996).
- Hyde, Douglas *A Literary History of Ireland* (London, 1967).

- Kennedy, Mike 'Is leis an Tighearna an talamh agus an làn (the earth and all that it contains belong to God): The Scottish Gaelic settlement history of Prince Edward Island' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1995).
- King, Elspeth *Scotland Sober and Free The Temperance Movement 1829-1979* (Glasgow, 1979).
- LeMahieu, D. L. *The Mind of William Paley* (Nebraska, 1976).
- Lockhart, J. G. *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott Volume I* (Cambridge 1902).
- Low, Mary *Celtic Christianity and Nature* (Edinburgh, 1996).
- Lynch, Michael *Scotland: A New History* (London, 1991).
- MacBain, Alexander 'Popular Tales' *TGSI*, 13 (1886-87), 103-22
- MacBain A. & Kennedy, J.eds *Reliquiae Celticae* vols 1 & 2 (Inverness 1892-94).
- MacCowan, Roderick *The Men of Skye* (Glasgow, 1902).
- MacCurdy, Edward "'Caraid nan Gaidheal'" *TGSI* 39/40 (1942-50), 229-42.
- MacDonald, Alexander *Story and Song from Loch Ness-Side* (Inverness, 1914).
- MacDonald, Kenneth *Social and Religious Life in the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1902)
- Macdonald, D. A. 'A Visual Memory', *SS*, 22 (1978), 1-26.
- MacEacharn, Dòmhnall *Am Fear-Ciùil* (Glasgow, 1904).
- MacInnes, John *The Evangelical Movement in the Highlands 1688-1800* (Aberdeen, 1951).
- MacInnes, John 'The Christian Church', in *The Hub of the Highlands* (Inverness, 1975), pp. 155-70.
- MacInnes, John 'Religion in Gaelic Society', *TGSI*, 52 (1980-82), 222-42.
- MacInnes, John 'Recordings of Scottish Gaelic Heroic Ballads' in *The Heroic Process: Form, Function and Fantasy in Folk Epic*, ed. by Bo Almqvist, Séamas Ó Catháin and Pádraig Ó Héalaí, (Dún Laoghaire, 1987), pp. 101-30.
- Mackay, J. G. 'Social Life in Skye from Legend and Story', *TGSI*, 29 (1914-19), 338-39.
- Mackay, W. J. 'History of the Highland Church' in *Ceud Bliadhna (A Hundred Years) Edinburgh Highland Church, Cambridge Street 1851-1951* (Edinburgh, 1951), pp. 12-33.
- MacKenzie, Alexander *The History of the Highland Clearances* (Inverness, 1883; repr. Edinburgh, 1991).
- MacKenzie, Donald W. 'The Worthy Translator - How the Scottish Gaels Got the Scriptures in their Own Language', *TGSI*, 57 (1990-92), 168-202
- MacKenzie, J. *Sar-obair nam Bard Gaelach* (Glasgow, 1841).
- MacKenzie, William *Skye: Iochdar - Trotternish* (Glasgow, 1930).

- MacKinnon, Lachlan ed. *Prose Writings of Donald MacKinnon* (Edinburgh, 1956).
- MacKinnon, Neil, J. 'Strath, Skye in the mid-nineteenth century' *TGSI*, 51 (1978-80), 173-98.
- MacLean, Donald *The Spiritual Songs of Dugald Buchanan* (Edinburgh, 1913).
- MacLean, Marianne *The People of Glengarry. Highlanders in Transition, 1745-1820* (Toronto, 1991).
- MacLean, Magnus *The Literature of the Highlands* (Glasgow, 1904).
- MacLean, Sorley *Ris a' Bhruthaich: The Criticism and Prose Writings of Sorley MacLean* ed. by William Gillies, (Stornoway, 1985).
- MacLean Sorley *O Choille gu Bearradh* (Manchester, 1977).
- MacLennan, Jean M. *From Shore to Shore* (Edinburgh, 1977).
- MacLeod, Angus ed. *The Songs of Duncan Bàn Macintyre* (Edinburgh, 1952).
- MacLeod, Donald John 'Gaelic Prose', *TGSI* 49 (1974-76), 198-230.
- MacLeod, Donald John 'Gaelic Prose', in *The History of Scottish Literature* vol. 4 ed. by Cairns Craig, (Aberdeen, 1987), pp. 331-35.
- MacLeod, Rev. Dr. Roderick 'The Bishop of Skye', *TGSI*, 53 (1982-84), 174-209.
- MacMillan, Somerled ed. *Sporan Dhòmhnaill* (Edinburgh, 1968).
- MacNeill, Nigel *The Literature of the Highlanders* (Stirling, 1892).
- MacPhail, I. M. M. *The Crofters' War* (Stornoway, 1989).
- MacPherson, Màiri *Dain agus Orain Ghaidhlig* (Inbhirnis, 1891).
- MacQueen, Malcolm *Skye Pioneers and "the Island"* (Winnipeg, 1929).
- Macrae, Rev. Alexander ed. *Mary Macpherson, Bean Torra Dhamh: Her Poems and Life* (Glasgow, n.d.).
- Matheson, William ed. *The Songs of John MacCodrum* (Edinburgh, 1938).
- Matheson, William ed. *The Blind Harper: An Clarsair Dall* (Edinburgh, 1970).
- Mearns, Alexander B. 'The Minister and the Bailiff: A Study of Presbyterian Clergy in the Northern Highlands During the Clearances', *RSCHS*, 24 Part I (1990), 53-75.
- Mechie, Rev. Stewart 'Education for the ministry in Scotland since the Reformation II', *RSCHS*, 14 (1960-63), 161-78.
- Meek, Donald E. ed. *Màiri Mhór nan Oran* (Glasgow, 1977).
- Meek, Donald E. ed. *The Campbell Collection of Gaelic Proverbs and Proverbial Sayings* (Inverness, 1978).
- Meek, Donald E. 'The Land Question Answered from the Bible: The Land Issue and the Development of a Highland Theology of Liberation', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 103 No. 2 (1987), 84-89.

- Meek, Donald E. 'Evangelicalism and Emigration: Aspects of the Role of Dissenting Evangelicalism in Highland Emigration to Canada', in *Proceedings of the First North American Congress of Celtic Studies* ed. by Gordon W. MacLennan (Ottawa, 1988), pp. 15-35.
- Meek, Donald E. 'The Gaelic Bible' in *The Bible in Scottish Life and Literature* ed. by David F. Wright, (Edinburgh, 1988).
- Meek, Donald E. 'The Baptists of the Ross of Mull: Evangelical Experience and Social Change in a West Highland Community', *Northern Studies*, 26 (1989), 28-42.
- Meek, Dòmhnall E. 'Ath-sgrùdadh Dughall Bochanan II', *Gairm*, 148 (1989), 319-31.
- Meek, Donald E. *Tuath is Tighearna: Tenants and Landlords* (Edinburgh, 1995).
- Merrill, Elizabeth *The Dialogue in English Literature* (New York, 1911).
- Moore, Ruth *Charles Darwin* (London, 1957).
- Morrison, Hew 'Notices of the ministers of the Presbytery of Tongue from 1726 to 1763: from the diary of the Rev. Murdoch Macdonald of Durness', *TGSI*, 11 (1885), 293-310.
- Nicolson, Alexander *History of Skye: A Record of the families, the social conditions and the literature of the island* (Glasgow, 1930).
- Ó Baoill, Colm ed. *Bàrdachd Shilis na Ceapaich* (Edinburgh, 1972).
- Ó Baoill, Colm 'Norman MacLeod, *Cara na nGael*' *SGS*, Part 2 (1981), 159-68.
- Ó Cróinin, Dáibhí *Early Medieval Ireland 400-1200* (New York, 1995).
- Ó Cuív, Brian 'A Colam Cille Dialogue', *Éigse*, 12 (1967-68), 165-72.
- Rice, C. Duncan *The Scots Abolitionists 1833-1861* (Louisiana, 1981).
- Richards, Eric 'How tame were the Highlanders during the Clearances', *SS*, 17 (1973), 35-50.
- Richards, Eric *A History of the Highland Clearances: Agrarian Transformation and the Evictions 1746-1886* (London, 1982).
- Richards, Eric *A History of the Highland Clearances Volume 2: Emigration, Protest, Reasons* (London, 1985).
- Robertson, Rev. Charles M. 'Gaelic Poems collected in Braemar by the Rev. Robert MacGregor, minister of Kilmuir, Skye, and others composed by himself and Mr. Alex. MacGregor, schoolmaster, Dull', *TGSI*, 33 (1925-27), 2-43.
- Robertson, Rev. Charles M. 'Songs of Alexander MacGregor', *TGSI*, 33 (1925-27), 187-203.
- Robertson, Hamish 'Studies in Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*', *SGS*, 12 Part 2 (1976), 220-65.
- Rosman, Doreen M. *Evangelicals and Culture* (Kent, 1984).

- Ross, Donald 'The Cosmos of the Ancient Gaels in its Relation to their ethics Part I', *TGSI*, 6 (1876-77), 120-48.
- Shaw, Margaret Fay *Folksong and Folklore of South Uist* (Aberdeen, 1986).
- Smith, Donald C. *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest* (New York, 1987).
- Smout, Christopher 'Tours in the Scottish Highlands from the eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries', *Northern Scotland*, 5 (1983), 99-123.
- Stokes, Whitley 'The Colloquy of the Two Sages', *Revue Celtique*, 26 (1905), 4-64.
- Sugg, Laura S. 'The experience of God in everyday life in Alexander Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1997).
- Swann, Elsie *Christopher North (John Wilson)* (Edinburgh, 1934).
- Thomson, Derick S. *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland* (Oxford, 1983).
- Thomson, Derick S. ed. *The MacDiarmid MS Anthology: Poems and Songs Mainly Anonymous from the Collection Dated 1770* (Edinburgh, 1992).
- Thomson, Frank, G. 'John Francis Campbell', *TGSI*, 54 (1984-86), 1-37.
- Thomson, R. L. ed. *Adtimchiol an Chreidimh* (Edinburgh, 1962).
- Thomson, R. L. ed. *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh* (Edinburgh, 1970).
- Turner, Paul *English Literature 1832-1890 Excluding the Novel* (Oxford, 1989).
- Vincent, David *Literacy and Popular Culture* (Cambridge, 1989).
- Walpole, K. A. 'The Humanitarian Movement of the Early Nineteenth Century to Remedy Abuses on Emigrant Vessels to America', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* Fourth Series Vol. 14 (1931), 197-224.
- Watson, Adam 'Old Gaelic poems from Aberdeenshire', *SGS*, 14 Part 1 (1983), 25-58.
- Watson, William J. ed. *Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig* (Stirling, 1918; 2nd ed. 1932).
- Wellwood, John *Norman MacLeod* (Edinburgh, 1897).
- Withers, Charles W. J. *Gaelic in Scotland 1698-1981* (Edinburgh, 1984).
- Withers, Charles W. J. *Gaelic Scotland* (London, 1988).
- Withers, Charles W. J. 'On the geography and social history of Gaelic', in *Gaelic and Scotland. Alba agus a' Ghàidhlig*, ed. by William Gillies (Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 101-30.